Doing the Ideal Academic

Gender, Excellence and Changing Academia

Rebecca W. B. Lund
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Rebecca W. B. Lund
Main dissertation advisor
Janne Tienari, Organisation and Management, School of Business,
Aalto University

Co-dissertation advisor
Marja Vehviläinen, Gender Studies, School of Humanities and Social
Sciences, Tampere University

Opponent
Professor Karin Widerberg, Department of Sociology and Human
Geography, University of Oslo, Norway
Abstract

Academia is changing worldwide, shaped by capitalism and neoliberalism. Along with this comes notions of what constitutes good academic work and the valuable academic. Taking junior female academics embodied experiences as methodological point of entry the thesis aims to understand the construction of the "ideal academic" from this standpoint. More specifically, to investigate how the gendered social relations organise practices that make the ideal academic within changing academia actionable. The thesis draws on and develops Dorothy Smith’s Institutional Ethnography to understand how local everyday practices are shaped within larger translocal relations and macro processes, such as capitalism, neoliberalism, the drive for participation in “inevitable” globalisation and higher educational reforms. The thesis is based on qualitative empirical research. The empirical location of the research is changing higher education in Finland and the empirical materials - consisting of observations, interviews and textual gathering - are the result of three years of fieldwork at one Finnish University. Drawing on these, the thesis explores how texts, discourses and ideologies, mediated through standardised notions of quality and evaluation practices, make up an image of “the ideal academic” and shape local practice and experience. The thesis reveals the gendered social organisation of competence and potentiality as it is constructed in and around the institutional intentions of becoming “world class”, the textually legitimised practice of boasting, and the relationship between quality standards and discourses of love. Each chapter unpacks a layer of how gender inequality is produced and reproduced in academia through textual coordination of everyday practices. The thesis highlights how eligibility to engage in these practices, activate these discourses and approximate the prevalent ideal involves doing gender. More particularly, it shows how doing a particular form of global masculinity involving geocentrism, careerism and informalism, has entered into the social relations of academic work. Moreover, it, demonstrates how these operate parallel to and interconnect in complex ways with doing Finnishness, compulsory optimism, the individualised responsibilised self and willingness to be “taken away from home”. Indeed, the thesis illuminates a social organisation of academic work that increases the polarisation between those who succeed and those who do not on the standardised quality criteria. In doing so the thesis shows how dominant, so-called neutral and objective, textually mediated standards of quality contribute to the (re)production of inequality between both men and women, and indeed, women and women within changing academia.

Keywords Gendered social relations; gender in academia; junior female academics; quality of academic work; the social organisation of academic work; neoliberalism and academia; Finland; Institutional ethnography; feminist theory.
It is difficult to know exactly where to start. Countless people have provided me support, encouragement, challenging insights, critical comments, friendship and collaboration over the past five years. This doctoral research project would not have been possible without any of you.

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Innumerable people have read and commented on my work throughout the years at international conferences, workshops, national tutorials, PhD courses, research seminars. I am extremely grateful for the comments, inspiration and support I have received from the outset. During the first year of my doctoral studies I knew of no one who did Institutional Ethnography, and I was beginning to get quite desperate. Therefore, I decided to write an email to the mother of Institutional Ethnography, Sociology Professor Dorothy Smith. I introduced myself, and my research, attached a work-in-progress conference paper and asked her if I could visit her in Canada. I did not expect a reply. However, only a couple of days later Smith replied that she would be giving a workshop with Karin Widerberg at Oslo University and encouraged me to sign up. I did, and, by coincidence, ended up staying at the same hotel as Dorothy Smith. I cannot begin to express how important the discussions we had turned out to be for my work. Wow! Thank you for this opportunity. Many other people have made a difference and have my utmost gratitude. Among these I would especially like to thank Keijo Räsänen, Anne Herbert, Susan Meriläinen, Saija Katila, Elina Hentonen, Kirsi LaPointe, Jeff Hearn, Annette Risberg, Karin Widerberg, and the members of the Nordic Institutional Ethnography network.

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Writing a doctoral thesis is not an easy task. Perhaps even less so when doing it in a country and department in which you are a stranger. There have
certainly been rough times and it did have personal consequences I had not foreseen. But it has also made me stronger and full of gratitude. I have had an engaging and inspiring interdisciplinary oriented working community and made some wonderful friends with whom I could share joy, frustration and ideas. I would like to thank Miikka Lehtonen, my partner through the first three years of my doctoral studies and still my friend today, for all the fun and discussions we had, the support and encouragement he gave me and still gives me now.

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On a sunny day in the Botanical Gardens of Copenhagen,
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Rebecca W.B. Lund
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1. Contextualising gender in academia

A junior female academic: ... a couple of years back our Dean sent a letter to everybody ... and it said something like research means 24 hour commitment to what you are doing... and I was just thinking oh my God [...] I don't like this culture where people are divided between those who will succeed and those who won't [...] there are people that they want to keep and people that they want to get rid of...

Everyday situated embodied experiences and voices of junior female academics, such as the one expressed in the extract above, are the point of entry for this doctoral thesis. Conversely, such experiences are the point of departure for studying the complex relational and material social construction of what counts as the good academic in changing academia. The thesis explores how people are differently positioned within the social relations in terms of living up to the prevalent ideal. More specifically, it shows how and in which ways the ideal is gendered. In order to “preserve” the voices and experiences of junior female academics as the turning point for discovery, the thesis develops a research approach that draws on Institutional Ethnography. Institutional Ethnography is a method of inquiry, a theorised practice for discovering how the social is coordinated. This method was originally devised by Dorothy Smith (2005), with the purpose of creating anti-objectifying sociology for and with people. The thesis demonstrates how this is achieved by explicating the large amounts of reflexive work the institutional ethnographer engages in to “preserve” the voices and embodied experiences at the centre of investigation.

The opening quote above is an extract from a conversation I had with a junior female academic a couple of years ago. Following the introduction of new managerial practices for measuring output and holding people, departments, schools and universities accountable to productivity goals and quality standards, her home institution and academic community had been undergoing a great deal of change. Historically, Finnish universities functioned under public law, were taxpayer funded and tightly controlled via legislation. Their core objective was to provide teaching and educate a competent workforce for the Finnish public and private sector. However, a number of changes during the late 1990s and 2000s have resulted in significant differences in the way Finnish universities operate today. Finland's
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recession in the 1990s resulted in public sector restructuring, welfare cuts and austerity measures. Finland became more dependent on global financiers, who, in return for their investment, demanded certain types of management: while collegial decision-making had previously been prevalent, new forms of managerialism were now part of everyday life in Finnish universities. Annual negotiations and performance agreements with the Ministry of Education regarding output were initiated and competitive project-based funding was introduced. The rising global popularity of New Public Management and neoliberal ideologies, as a means to increase quality and efficiency, became the basis of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) (2005) international review of higher education in its member countries, including Finland. OECD recommended explicitly standardised educational qualifications to make them comparable, transferable and facilitate/increase mobility and recognition between countries. OECD emphasised research output as the standard measure. These recommendations were aligned perfectly with the European Union (of which Finland had become a member in 1995), and its guidelines for self-assessment, benchmarking and international comparison with the stated purpose of increasing the quality of higher education (EU 1998). With the most recent reforms, “internationalisation” has emerged as a measure of competitiveness and target output and Finnish universities are to improve their competitive position in the global knowledge economy (Cimo 2009; Ministry of Education 2009). This involves registering the movement of students and faculty to and from Finland, international research partners, international funding, publications and citations in international top journals. Moreover newly passed 2010 University Act emphasised the need for promoting a more “entrepreneurial culture” in the Finnish Universities by increasing organisational autonomy and flexibility (Aarrevaara 2009) as a step to achieving the ambition of becoming a world-class provider of education and research. A flagship project in these reforms was the Aalto University merger that took place in 2010. Aalto University – the University that the above quoted junior female academic works for – was to become the first Foundation-based University in Finland and has introduced several HR and other strategic managerial measures as part of the effort to become world-class. Among these is the decision to implement a more competitive system for academic employment in order to attract the best and most talented scholars from around the world. Closely related to these reforms are changes in the priority of academic work tasks. New ideals in terms of what counts as a good academic, pertaining to text based and increasingly standardised notions of quality and excellence, are shaping the everyday lives of academics at Aalto and other universities in Finland.

The concrete everyday experiences of junior female academics provide one point of departure for describing and analysing the ways in which these reforms have changed how our universities are run and how academics are expected to work and perform. It provides an entry point for analysing these changes from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged as a result. Specifically, those who cannot commit themselves to research 24 hours a day,
those who do not manage well competitively and do not succeed in accordance to the standards of the institution.

A considerable volume of research has shown that men and women are differently positioned within academia in terms of climbing the academic career ladder and living up to standards of quality. Diverging approaches to gender have been utilised, and not all of these are critical or feminist in nature. One, and perhaps the most common approach, theoresses men and women as two separate categories of people, who hold different preferences as a result of biological and psychological sex differences and gendered socialisation. This explains why many women choose to orient themselves towards the family rather than an academic career. As a result women frequently end up in subordinate positions to men in the academic hierarchy and they remain largely dependent on their husbands or partners within the home. (e.g. Long 1990; Valian 1999; O’Laughlin & Bischoff 2005; Bird 2011). The problem with such an approach is that it cannot explain the systemic nature of inequality, and, accordingly, why women with different orientations and priorities also experience being unfavourably positioned.

Explanations based on similar assumptions and theorisations of sex/gender difference may also be structuralist in nature. These explain inequality between men and women in academic careers through such factors as educational levels/quality/specialisation, union membership, full-time/part-time work, publication and patenting productivity, parental leaves and career breaks. (see e.g. EU 2005; EU 2009a; EU 2009b; EU 2013; Bentley 2011; Haataja 2009; Frietsch et al 2009; Moody & Light 2006; Ding et al 2006; Leahey 2006; Duvander et al 2005; Xie & Schauman 1993 and 2005; Fox 2005; Stack 2004; Moody 2004; Etzkowitz et al 2000). Such explanations do not, however, give much insight into the processes and practices that created these differences. Moreover, they do not allow us to understand why gender inequality persists despite changes in policies and possibilities in and around academia that would seem to work in its favour (see e.g. OECD Employment 2006). Furthermore, neither the individualist or structuralist theorisation helps problematize the neutrality claim of policies, organisational standards, nor the very assumptions on which notions of quality/success are based.

In response to the abovementioned shortcomings, many academics have suggested theorising gender as arising in historical relational processes among people embedded in patriarchal capitalist societies (i.e. capitalism and patriarchy provide the material basis for inequality and oppression). Gender is part of a dynamic and contested relational process within the “material production of social inequalities”. When particular ideologies, discourses, practices and processes achieve a taken-for-granted status, gendered oppression, subordination and gendered divisions of labour are (re)produced and become hard to challenge and change. The ongoing reproduction of gender inequality is a result of a division between the value producing activities that are recognised and rewarded within capitalist work organisations, and value producing (reproductive) activities that are often silenced and taken-for-granted, but nonetheless essential for capitalist
accumulation. The latter frequently consists of emotional, care-related, and other feminised work within workplaces and homes, and it is usually conducted by women. The gendered division of labour is what constitutes women as women and men as men. (e.g. Hartmann 1979; Acker 1990, 1992, 1994, 2006 and 2008; Korvajärvi 1998; Meriläinen & Katila 2000 and 2002; Husu 2001; Kantola 2008; Van den Brink & Benschop 2011 and 2012; Bleijenbergh et al 2013; Thornton 2013; Fletcher et al 2007; Davies & O’Callaghan 2014; Maude 2014; Jenkins 2014). This approach has sometimes (and not always justifiably so, I would claim) been critiqued for not taking into consideration the different experiences of women (and men) along age, class and race divisions. Furthermore, the theorisation of the gendered division of labour as constituting women as women and men as men, would appear somewhat lacking when we consider the more recent developments in capitalism, whereby the feminine and the emotional is ascribed value (e.g. Hochschild 1987; Adkins & Jokinen 2008; Adkins 2008; Brunila 2012; Mäkinen 2012;). One may ask what, under such circumstances, constitutes women as women and men as men at the present time, and, indeed, whether and how gender is of continued relevance for explaining persisting inequalities within academia.

Other approaches have, by suggesting that we destabilise and theorise gender as “discursive processes and practices”, that are always in the process of becoming through their linguistic, historical and political construction, attempted to answer the above-mentioned problems. Differences are granted priority above similarity and analysis of gender discourses and dynamics within large/meta institutions of capitalism or patriarchy are replaced by analysis of micro-level local institutions. (see e.g. Metcalfe & Slaughter 2008). The problem with this approach is that as a result of its emphasis on culture, micro level processes, and rejection of experience and ideology, it is not able to explain the translocal and systemic nature of gender, class and race based inequality in academia (albeit more prevalent in some places than others). Therefore, it is not able to provide an analytical basis for collective strategies and political responses.

This thesis aims to respond to the shortcomings of feminist studies of academia and organisations by studying and revealing academic work as gendered social relations, produced in local/micro processes, and, in turn, shaped within larger translocal/macro processes. Social relations, as a concept, collapse the distinction between individual and structure by treating structures as relational and material organisers of people’s everyday activities and experiences. Through taking junior female scholars embodied experiences as a point of entry, the thesis seeks to understand the construction of the “ideal academic”. More specifically, it will focus on how the gendered social relations appear as organisers of practices that make actionable the ideal academic in changing academia. In order to achieve this, my second aim is to develop a research approach that draws on Institutional Ethnography (Smith 1987; Smith 2005; Smith 2006): a method of inquiry that allows me to respond to the above-mentioned shortcomings. Before defining the research questions I
will disentangle the context of this study; presenting my reader with a brief overview – of new capitalism, the rhetoric of globalisation, gender in the labour market and the ways in which these shape changes in higher education and gender in academia in Finland – should provide my reader with resources for making sense of my research questions.

1.1 New Capitalism and the rhetoric of Globalisation

Shifts within the capitalist economy and organisation are being detected and its scope and significance is, once more, a subject of keen debate. In the words of Nancy Fraser:

Capitalism is back! After decades in which the term could scarcely be found outside the writings of Marxian thinkers, commentators of varying stripes now worry openly about its sustainability, scholars from every school scramble to systematise criticisms of it and activists throughout the world mobilise in opposition to its practices [...] Nevertheless, the current boom in capitalism talk remains largely rhetorical – more a symptom of the desire for systematic critique than substantive contribution to it. Thanks to decades of social amnesia, whole generations of younger activists and scholars have become sophisticated practitioners of discourse analysis while remaining utterly innocent of the traditions of Kapitalkritik. They are only now beginning to ask how it could be practiced today to clarify the current conjuncture (Fraser 2014a, 55).

Although an orthodox Marxist conception and description of capitalism, and its internal contradictions, does not take the insights of gender, post-colonialism, ecology and political power “as structuring principles and axes of inequality in capitalist societies – let alone as stakes and premises of social struggle” into consideration, it still provides important conceptual and analytical resources and is not, in principle, antithetical to “being reconstructed from these perspectives” (Fraser 2014a, 56). Capitalism remains, in essence, characterised by four defining features. Firstly, private property is a central feature of capitalism and presupposes a class division between owners and producers. This was a result of the capitalist enclosure of the ‘commons’ (see also Federici 2004) and the transformation of shared resources into private property for a small minority. Secondly, the free labour market. People are formally/legally “‘free’ from enslavement or force and can freely move and enter into contractual employment relationships”. People are also, however, “‘free’ or ‘bereft of’ resources and means of subsistence that could entitle one to not take part in the labour market”. Thirdly, capitalism holds an “inbuilt directionality”, and human beings’ (owners as well as producers) efforts to satisfy their needs are

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1 The welfare state does, to some extent, allow for this possibility, but usually only as a temporary solution based on the assumption that the person will (re)enter the labour market. To the extent the person is permanently incapable of doing so, this person may receive support from the state, but this position of
systemically engaged in capital’s “unending self-expansion” through expanding their own capital. Fourthly, capitalist markets work to allocate the “factors of production”, “land, labour and capital” as well as “real estate, capital goods, raw material and credit”, thereby transforming all of these into “commodities”, ultimately leading to a commodification of the world. Additionally, the capitalist market is based on the assumption that it is the market forces that ultimately “determine how society’s surplus will be invested”. This fourth point has often been critiqued by academics, who have postulated dystopian fantasies, while forgetting to take into account the “emancipatory aspects of markets” as well as living arrangements that are not based on a cash wage, but rather on self-sustenance and public welfare goods (Fraser 2014a, 58-59).

While this is certainly true, it is also, however, true that contemporary capitalism involves a number of developments that puts pressure on the arrangements that have previously served to counter the worst social consequences and effects of capitalism. This includes the expansion of economic logics and market exchange to domains that were not previously operating in accordance to such demands, including, among others, granting information and knowledge commodity-like status (e.g. Kauppinen 2013) as a competitive advantage. This includes Post-Fordist modes of production, new forms of multinational corporations and organisations, large scale global financial exchange and an international division of labour. It also involves the so-called feminisation of labour and of the economy, with an increased emphasis on emotions, affection and personal characteristics as being focal in defining the workers’ exchange value. Finally, it has proven to involve a growing insecurity and complexity of working life (Mäkinen 2012, 21) and an ever-growing demand for a flexible, perpetually available labour resource/work force, i.e. people who are desperate to find employment tend to work harder, are less organised, complain and demand less; and can be considered to have the “right attitude” (Sennett 2006). Inequality has, according to Richard Sennett (2006) “become the Achilles’ heel of the modern economy”:

It appears in many forms: Massive compensation of top executives, a widening gap between wages at the top and the bottom of corporations, the stagnation of the middle layers of income relative to those of the elite. Winner-takes-all competition generates extreme material inequality. These inequalities of wealth are matched within certain kinds of firms by a widening social inequality. In bureaucracies in the throes of reorganization, the erasure of intermediate layers of bureaucracy can erase the communication chain by which power is interpreted as it passes downward, and information is modulated as it passes upward. Once reformed, the flexible firm can map out this more disconnected

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*Defined as the “collective fund of social energies exceeding those required to reproduce a given form of life and to replenish what is used up in the course of living it […]” (Fraser 2014a, 58). This involves questions about how one wants to live one’s life; e.g. balance “productive work” with family or leisure, or how to relate to non-human nature.*
The center governs the periphery in a specific way. On the periphery people are on their own in the process of laboring without much interaction up and down the chain of command. Those at the periphery are answerable to the centre only for results. This distanced relation is, in fine, the geography of globalization. At the opposite extreme, in a bureaucratic pyramid, would stand the paternalistic employer [...] The sociological idea here is that inequality translates into distance; the greater the distance – the less a felt connection on both sides – the greater the social inequality between them. (Sennett 2006, 54-55)

Strongly connected to the expansion of capitalist logics and market-like exchanges to new extremes and spheres is the rhetoric of globalisation. While globalisation is not a new phase of capitalism per se, it, to an increasing degree, is being used by national governments, the EU, various business and community organisations and powerful international agencies, such as OECD, IMF and the World Bank to “justify voluntary surrender to the financial markets and their conversion to the fiduciary conception of the firm” (Skeggs 2004, 83). Such conversions are not, as they are often politically claimed to be, inevitable, but rather the result of domestic political decisions that increasingly favour owners of capital and the privileged (see e.g. Bauman 1998).

1.2 Gender and the labour market

Gender-based wage differences and sex-segregation in working life, disfavouring women, is a global phenomenon that has been deepening with the new developments in capitalism (e.g. Acker 2006), although there are national, as well as race and class based variations in degree and extent (e.g. Mohanty 2003). Nonetheless, gender-based structural issues are to an increasing extent being acknowledged, assessed, reported and addressed on a national level. This is orchestrated through policy recommendations (largely ignoring class and race divisions) by international organisations, such as the OECD (e.g. OECD 2006) and World Economic Forum (e.g. Gender Gap 2014), and the European Union (e.g. European Commission 2010). Women’s inclusion into and participation in the labour market is considered an important indicator of a country’s existing or potential economic competitiveness, as well as a liberal, modern and progressive attitude deemed necessary for successful participation in the global market economy. (Acker 2006; Skeggs 2004; Eisenstein 2010). Reports developed by these international agencies show that, within the European Union, the gender gap is smallest in the Nordic countries (Gender Gap Report 2014). In these countries female employment is considered normal and the majority of women participate in the labour market. For decades, and until fairly recently³, it was noteworthy that women in the Nordic countries were not excluded from the

³ This is a tendency that has been changing within recent years – as I shall show.
labour market by entering motherhood. In fact, unlike many other European countries, a large majority of Nordic women, most notably the Finnish, with children below the age of three would participate in the labour market. (Rantalaiho 1997).

In Finland women’s labour market participation has increased. However, the starting point was different, because Finnish women have taken an active role in the labour market from the early 20th century. In 1950 Finnish women made up 41% of the labour force, 39% in 1960, 42% in 1970, 44% in 1975, 47% in 1997 and 45% 2012 (Statistics from ‘Men and Women in Finland’). Furthermore, unlike other Nordic and industrialised countries, Finnish women have historically tended to work full-time. Finnish women fare well in international comparison in other ways too. In all the factors that would usually be proposed for explaining women’s subordination to men, Finnish women seem to have been doing remarkably well in surmounting them. In fact, in some ways, they are even doing better than men. They work full time, seemingly without having to choose between family and work, they are highly educated and they are organised in unions. Yet, Finnish women’s position in the labour market is not self-evident or as strong as that of men. Inequality, gender hierarchies and segregation persist in Finnish working life (see e.g. Rantalaiho 1997; Tuori & Silius 2002), and, more recently, there has been a rather dramatic shift in Finnish women’s opportunities for combining work/career with having children. The most recent statistical updates show that 45% of Finnish women with children below three years of age are not active in the labour force (Men and Women in Finland 2014, 40 and 50).

Finland is often considered to be a model country in terms of equality between the sexes; it is, for example, ranked 3rd in the 2010 Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum. However, a sharp horizontal segregation between sectors and jobs that are considered to be male or female remains in the Finnish labor market. Also, in the private sector in particular, organizations are marked by vertical segregation as men continue to dominate the upper echelons. The gendered wage gap is yet another sign of persistent inequality, as women tend to earn 10-20 percent less than men in equivalent positions. Gender equality is thus never a fait accompli (Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013, 165).

The numbers and figures provide important insights, but do not explain how the “statistical reality” was produced. Nor do they give us insight into the complexity of processes that, despite the many advantages Finnish women have in relative terms, contribute to making gender inequality a persistent feature of Finnish society. In the following section I therefore consider some of the historical, cultural and political processes of the Finnish gender system. I will, in considering questions of gender equality provide an outline of the particularities defining, on a broader scale, Finland and Finnish working life and, more specifically in academia. In doing so I will also explore the manner
in which the Finnish processes have themselves been shaped within larger regional, cross-national and global processes.

1.3 The gender system and state feminism in Finland

To understand the persistent gender inequalities, hierarchies and differences and how the Finnish gender system has achieved its current form, one must consider the way in which this is shaped within the logic of “compulsory heterosexuality” or “heteronormativity” (Rich 1980; Rantalaiho 1997), the binary categorisations the logic establishes and the resulting hierarchies. The “logic of difference” exists in the way gender is socially constructed in separate naturalised categories of male/masculine and female/feminine. The “logic of hierarchy” in the way in which the male or masculinity is treated as the norm within the logic of heteronormativity, against which the female or femininity becomes a position of deficiency.

In many ways the logic of difference is downplayed in Finland. Within Finnish working life men and women can largely meet within a rather “un-eroticised” work environment, characterised by a “strong work ethic”. In accordance with this motherhood, rather than being something idealised and sacred, is considered a matter of “work, everyday chores and responsibilities” and Finnish women’s identity is defined more by motherhood than by wifehood (Rantalaiho 1997, 21). Moreover, another interesting factor is that the Finnish language is quite neutral in delineating gender. Rather than she or he, the gender neutral *hän* is used. Also there is no distinction between gender and sex, but one word, *sukupuoli*, which translates as “kin-half”, indicating the logic of heteronormativity characterising the Finnish gender system.

All of this has its roots in the socioeconomic history of Finland (as well as other Nordic countries) where a working-oriented heterosexual partnership between men and women, although involving a gendered division of labour, was necessary for survival. The sparse settlement in pre-industrial Finland meant that sociability happened at home, involving men and women together. According to Liisa Rantalaiho this resulted in a “lasting cultural avoidance of presenting gender as conflictual” (Rantalaiho 1997).

The Finnish national identity is rooted in a belief in equality and the absence of difference of worth (value), either gender- or class based. Distinctions between male and female imagery and behavior clearly exist as defining characteristics, but they are perceived to be differences which exist as part of an interdependent relationship between men and women. (Marakowitz 1996, 56)

Women’s political citizenship has a relatively long history in Finland. The suffragette/women’s organisation *Naisunioni* (Union of Finnish women) and house-mother organisation *Marttaliitto* (The Martha Organisation), were founded in the late 19th century by well-educated upper- and middle class
women. Influenced by the political landscape of the time – that is, the rise of national movements, the growing labour movement, the suffragette movement, increasing support to progressive political parties, the approach of Russian revolution – these organisations developed their political agendas in the face of, and in response to, the challenges related to poverty, inequality and lack of autonomous rule. Until 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy under the Russian Czar. Naisunioni was established with the purpose of furthering the political, economic and social rights of women through constitutional reform. Marttaliitto was initiated by the president and initiator of Naisunioni, Lucina Hagman, with the purpose of bridging class and political divisions. This was performed via the nationwide mobilisation and education of women in order to participate in raising the quality of life among the poor, and to empower women of all class backgrounds to promote the idea of a common Finnish culture and language within their homes. Indeed, the national enlightenment project was a gendered project from the outset, relying heavily on women’s efforts; it became a significant collective strategy in creating a women’s movement that spanned class and regional divisions. Partly as a result of the work of these two organisations, Finnish women were among the first in Europe to achieve not only the right to vote but also, in the 1906 constitutional reform, the right to take office (Marakowitz 1996). In 1907, in the first modern democratic elections of Finland, 18 women were elected and today (2015) women make up 83 of the total 200 seats in parliament.

Therefore, the political concerns and agenda of the women’s movement were institutionalised and represented in the state administration from early on through women’s insider position. The Finnish state, unlike the German and American, achieved position as a defender and ally in working against “private patriarchy” (Rantalaiho 1997) and in furthering women’s independence of men and marriage for economic survival. This phenomenon is named “state feminism” (Holli & Kantola 2007).

Whereas corporate power structures, unions and labour market policies have traditionally been, and still are, dominated by men, Finnish women have been active in constructing the welfare state’s social policies and equal opportunities legislation (Rantalaiho 1997). By sharing family expenses and caring duties through family and child allowances, as well as child and elder care services, the Finnish state made an individualistic dual earner family model possible (see Tuori & Silius 2002, 76-77).

Furthermore, a number of legal political institutional arrangements have secured formal equality between men and women. In 1962 The Principle of Equal pay for Equal work was established in private and public sectors, though not incorporated in Finnish legislation before the ratification of the 1987 Act on Equality between Men and Women (Tuori and Silius 2002). Placing Finland as the last among Nordic countries to introduce a gender equality law (Holli & Kantola 2007). The Act on Equality, based on the guidelines of the United Nations and inspired by other Nordic countries, has

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three major goals: Firstly, the prevention of sex discrimination; secondly, the promotion of equality between men and women; and thirdly, the improvement of women’s status in working life.

In 1992 it became illegal to discriminate on the basis of pregnancy and family care responsibilities. Since 1995 work organisations with more than 30 employees have been obliged to promote and measure gender equality. Unfortunately, as Kaisa Kauppinen (1997) has remarked, this has turned out to be problematical in that large organisations have equality plans, while small organisations can simply, and often do, choose not to develop one. In 1995 a quota system was furthermore introduced to ensure that the proportion of either sex should not be below 40% in official boards and committees in municipalities. The ban on employment-based discrimination includes discrimination in recruitment/hiring practices, wages, working conditions, sexual harassment, supervision and employment termination. (Tuori & Silius 2002).

Compliance with the Act on Equality is secured through a matrix structure of authorities. The Finnish parliament’s Employment and Equality Committee consists of 15 MPs that, among other areas, are responsible for handling matters related to gender equality. The Minister of Social Affairs and Health holds the key responsibility for overseeing and securing the implementation of equality law and policies. This Ministry has three independent bodies. (1) The Gender Equality Unit which, in collaboration with other Ministries, devises gender equality policy proposals for the Finnish parliament, deals with tasks related to gender mainstreaming and the coordination of cooperation on European and international levels. (2) The Ombudsman for Equality monitors the employers and higher education institutions’ compliance with the Act on Equality. (3) The Equality Board oversees compliance with equality legislation and resolves related issues. Beyond the institutionalised national policy level, various non-governmental women’s and labour market organisations also oversee matters of gender (in)equality. On a municipal level, working groups and committees have also been established to further equality. Numerical data regarding gender is provided annually by Statistics Finland in the Naiset ja Miehet Suomessa (Women and Men in Finland) reports, an important source of information for decision-makers, intervention and debate regarding gender issues (see e.g. debate on “gender quotas” in Finland, Tienari et al 2009). Despite the importance of the equality legislation and principles, it has, as indicated, been hard to achieve gender equality in practice. Consequently, it has been argued that the social policies have played a more significant role than the equality legislation in terms of understanding the state’s involvement and effect on women’s position in the Finnish labour market (Tuori & Silius 2002).

Since the mid-1990s two significant changes have, in particular, influenced the development of Finnish “state feminism”. Firstly, the recession of the 1990s, and secondly, though not less notably, Finland’s EU membership (Holli & Kantola 2007). The recession, and the welfare state cuts that followed

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5 There is no quota system for governmental or private organisations in Finland.
“affected women disproportionally” and “had a long-term impact on women’s labour market participation” (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83). Indeed, while unemployment “hit Finnish men earlier and harder than women”, women, more frequently than men, find themselves in a situation of “permanent temporariness” (Rantalaiho 1997, 20; see also Tuori & Silius 2002, 100-115; Men and Women in Finland 2014, 48).

There was a loss of public sector employment and women’s work now involves fixed short-term contract work as opposed to permanent jobs. Furthermore, there are tendencies towards feminization of poverty, resulting from the loss of redistributive policies for single parents. Several commentators suggest that the Finnish welfare model has undergone a shift from egalitarian to neo-familial model with increased women’s dependency on individual men and the state and men’s dependency on women’s poorly paid care work at home (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83-84).

As a result of the recession, the progress in gender equality achieved through decades of work suffered a setback, and strengthened/re-traditionalised the heteronormative logic on which the Finnish gender system and many social policies were based.

Membership of the EU since 1995 has also significantly shaped Finnish gender equality policies. This is particularly true in the form of improved individual rights and anti-discrimination legislation, the promotion of a gender mainstreaming agenda and, on the soft law side, gender equality recommendations, guidelines and action plans. Recently, the Act on Equality was extended in order to take into account “other markers of diversity”. Finland has, since independence in 1917, been “closed inward and opened outwards” and only since the early 1990s has experienced a slow increase in immigration from post-communist Russia, Estonia, Somalia and Asian countries. Furthermore, Finland having the fastest aging population in Europe (EU 2010; Kommunförbundet 2009), has resulted in a very explicit participation in the competition to attract young, well-educated, talented, white-collar immigrants who can work and pay taxes in Finland. Questions of race, ethnicity, age and class, however, continue to “stir restlessness in contemporary Finland”, as recent developments have brought about varying forms of discrimination, subordination, marginalisation and exclusion. These have, however, largely been silenced, covered up and reproduced through prevailing taken-for-granted notions of “sameness”; i.e. the idea that particular skills, attitudes, language skills and cultural competence are necessary, and that there is equal opportunity to learn and fulfil these. It is seldom questioned whether these skills, attitudes and cultural competences are in themselves, based on gendered, raced, classed and age assumptions and, therefore, fundamentally sources of inequality (see e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari &
The European gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination and progressive fatherhood initiatives improve, to a certain extent, both the quality of women’s participation and the inclusion of minorities in Finnish society and the labour market. However, it has been suggested that these initiatives are largely of benefit to those who are already privileged; that they are heavily shaped within the rhetoric of inevitable participation in the global capitalist economy (Eisenstein 2009), and that this has been used to legitimise social welfare cuts. The integration into the EU has put pressure on the Nordic welfare model in a number of ways through the promotion of neoliberal policies (see e.g. Bourdieu 1998; Jones 2012) and New Public Management (NPM) styles of governance. By calling for the primacy of free movement of people above social rights based on residence, it has the potential consequence of leading to cut in “national, redistributive, taxation funded social policies” (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83).

1.4 Higher education and gender in academia

Current changes, and continuities, in the purposes, role, management and organisation of higher education and universities are linked to such historical, economic and political processes, and the social and institutional developments that take place within them.

The last 30 years have involved a number of transformations and reforms with the purpose of making higher educational institutions and systems globally comparable and internationalised (e.g. Aarrevaara & Höltta 2008, 117). These reforms have been promoted globally by international organisations, such as the OECD; on a regional level by the harmonisation policies of the European Union; and, on national levels, by governments, industrial stakeholders, think tanks and the media. Higher Education institutions are being redefined into “systems” with “inputs” “through-puts” and “outputs” that should be measured and monitored for their quality (Ahola & Hoffman 2012, 11-12).

In a Finnish context academic pursuits and higher education have always been valued as a public good, and publicly funded through taxes. After the Second World War Finnish universities focused on teaching and research as a means of improving the living conditions of the Finnish people and supporting structural changes in business and society. Towards this purpose they achieved a formally equal status to serve particular regional economic and social needs. Up until the 1990s there was very little competition among them, and from 1974-2009, all university staff held civil servant status. Although there were different types of employment contracts for academic, administrative and other support staff, employment was relatively secure for the privileged and public service values prevailed. The emphasis with regards to academic staff\(^6\) was placed on the “input” side: it was demanding and

\(^6\) And students.
difficult to enter, but after entry the pressure on staff to produce research “output” would be minimal. The academic staff’s primary purpose was to provide the Finnish private and public sector with a well-educated workforce: the main focus was on teaching. International orientation was variable depending on the discipline or field in question. The natural sciences, medical sciences, technology and parts of economics and business studies were always published in English and were oriented towards an international audience. The social sciences and humanities, however, tended to focus on research for and about a Finnish audience, often in Finnish and with the Finnish standards and needs in mind. Academic staff would gradually have their salaries increased and climb the career ladder as a reward for their services, although achieving the status of Professor was, due to a very limited amount of professorships being available in Finnish Universities, difficult. While professorships were hard to achieve for anyone it was, nonetheless, more difficult for women than men. A collegial governance system prevailed at the universities: the head of department would be elected by his (or her) departmental colleagues and the rectors of each university were elected by the professors to serve for a fixed period.

The 1990s marked a turning point in Finnish higher education for many reasons. Significantly, the Finnish economy was affected by the economic and financial recession. Although having integrated itself to the Western market during the 1970s, Finland was, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, during the 1990s, able to align itself more explicitly (politically and economically) with Europe. Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and adapted itself to European initiatives, such as the thrust for evaluation of higher education, and for improving outputs and efficiency in higher education. As a result of the economic downturn Finland also became more dependent on different global/regional financiers, who expected certain types of management of their investments (Tainio et al 2003). These changes introduced new types of managerialism in Finnish universities.

The Finnish government established annual negotiations and performance agreements regarding outputs with each Finnish university. In these negotiations the point of departure was that the state provided funding, but each Finnish university had autonomy to manage it in a way that would both secure and increase outputs. Research initiatives that would further Finland’s competitive advantage and boost the economy were emphasised and rewarded. However, despite research activity increasing, there was no increase in funding for making more appointments. Instead, short term project funding was distributed through competitive funding application processes. As a result, Finnish universities began to experience a rapid growth in fixed-term project-based employments, and a related increase in the amount of time spent by academics managing projects and project staff, securing funding and keeping track of budgets. The performance agreements and the project-based competitive funding resulted in academics thinking about outputs in more quantifiable terms, albeit not to the extent we see now.
Meanwhile, in other industrialised nations, ideological shifts towards neoliberalism and New Public Management were observable. This was grounded in reactions to demographic changes and economic problems. Countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, and Australia were reducing direct state funding of higher education, while simultaneously invoking a strong understanding and rhetoric that higher education could contribute to national social and economic objectives. The policy makers demanded an increased efficiency and improved quality from higher education institutions. The concepts and tools for increasing efficiency and quality came from the large private corporations and their managerial practices, and were dependent on a market-oriented interpretation of motivations and activities e.g. supply, demand, cost. The popularity of these managerial concepts began, throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, to grow around the world (Dawson & Dargie 2002; Broadbent & Laughlin 2004). It was values along these lines that were to form the basis of OECD’s international review of higher education in member countries, in which Finland participated (OECD 2005).

The 2005 OECD recommendations explicitly commodified and standardised educational qualifications in order to make them internationally comparable and transferable. OECD members were expected to reach a mutual agreement on how to facilitate recognition and the mobility of academics. They emphasised monitoring research outputs that contributed to a nation’s knowledge base and the dissemination of research. These were in close alignment with and boosted the relevance of the European level guidelines that recommended measuring higher education quality through a high level of self-assessment by comparing one’s own quality with that of another nation state’s or institution (European Council 1998; ENQUA 2005).

‘Internationalisation’ also emerged as a measure of university competitiveness. In Finland, the government has taken concrete policy initiatives and formulated target outputs (CIMO, 2009; Ministry of Education 2009) for numbers of incoming and outgoing ‘international’ students, and their provision. Funding for research projects is increasingly tied to whether it can be proven to have ‘international’ partners in the project and arguments for its international relevance and visibility. Furthermore, as international companies are major sources of research funding in the fields of medicine, technology and business, these companies look at and compare universities all over the world. As a result the universities generally, and these disciplines in particular, wish to make themselves attractive and easily comparable for company investments. This is a shift that can be detected via a brief search of university websites. At the same time university graduates increasingly compete for employment on international labour markets, and therefore need to be able to evidence the international equivalence of their education. As a result Finnish universities now track and count the employment outcomes and the career paths of their alumni as a measure of the university’s quality. Finnish universities also track their academic staff’s ‘visits’ abroad, and their incoming international visitors. While there has, to date, only been a small amount of ‘international’ (i.e. non-Finnish) academic employees in Finnish
universities, and limited quantitative measures of the internationalisation of curriculum content, publications and citations in top international (i.e. English language) journals have become a key measure of both institutional and individual outcomes (Tienari 2012).

For Finnish national higher education evaluations, internal/external evaluations and international accreditations, the universities concerned have to compile and present evidence that they conform to standards in the way that they formulate and implement strategy. The processes involve the conscious and explicit construction, evaluation and revision of quality goals and criteria, as well as the practices and processes that will lead to their realisation. The standards by which the quality/-ies are judged are distributed through meetings at different levels of the university - on websites and posters, in emails etc. Through this, academic staff, become familiar with the standards to which they need to comply and aware of areas of possible improvement. A team of international colleagues visits the university/school/department to ensure, on behalf of the evaluating authority, that the reported evidence corresponds to the strategy. The team then writes a report on what they have found and also makes recommendations for improvements. Each university, school and department agrees to address the recommendations for improvement and to be checked again; generally in 5 year cycles. In this way the university can be seen to be marketing itself based on maintaining the standards of quality defined by international evaluations and accreditations.

Benchmarking and international comparisons are an integral part of the emerging managerial process. Comparisons with foreign universities considered world class demonstrated that a tenure track system of academic employment, corporate modes of operation, external board members from the private sector were commonplace. These benchmarks, as I shall return to later, should prove to have pivotal impact upon the most recent reforms in Finnish higher education.

Women’s right to education was, in the late 19th and early 20th century, promoted by Naisunioni and Marttaliitto as an important social right. Female education was considered central for improving the living conditions of Finnish families. Although, at that time, there were restrictions and only a few women gained academic degrees, research has indicated that male faculty in Finland generally maintained a rather positive attitude towards a female presence in academia due to being considered of significance in the nation building/national enlightenment project (Vainio 2012).

These days, as in other sectors, female academics with children are supported by social policies. The Act of Equality suggests that all universities should have equality committees, with an appointed secretary. However, the tendency has been for committees to be poorly funded and that the secretaries perform the equality related work in addition to other organisationally prioritised tasks (Tuori & Silius 2002).

The tendencies characterising the Finnish labour market and women’s position in it at large are mirrored in the Finnish higher educational sector and

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7 Both having a fair share of male members at the time
academia. A perusal of the Europe-wide gender statistics from 2010 (She Figures 2012) reveals that 46% of all PhD students in EU-27 were female. Between 2002 and 2010 there was an annual growth rate of 3.7% in female PhD students, compared to only 1.6% for male ones. In 2010 female PhD students equalled or outnumbered male PhD students in all fields except science, mathematics, computing and engineering. Despite this, the academic career paths of males and females look very different. Numbers from the same year indicate vertical segregation. While the amount of female students and graduates outnumbered the male, the proportion of female PhD students and PhD graduates was below that of male. The higher in academic employment the more evident this pattern gets, and women only account for 20% of full professorships. In the natural sciences and engineering this pattern is even more striking, women only counting for 11%. The proportion of women was highest in humanities and social sciences, with females respectively counting for 28.4% and 19.4%. Women were also less likely to hold decision-making positions, such as academic board memberships or academic managerial positions. Finally, and on a more positive note, cumulatively, the numerical data shows that between 2002 and 2010 there has been some success in closing the gender gap in terms of research funding success rates. (She Figures 2012)

Compared to the rest of Europe, including its fellow Nordic countries, Finland fares rather well, although the ‘glass ceiling’ and ‘gender scissors’ follow the same pattern as that of the rest of Europe. In 2010, female PhD students accounted for 54%, compared to 48% in Sweden and 45% in Denmark. But while the annual growth rate in female PhD students has overall been lower in Finland than the European average, the growth rate has been negative when it comes to male PhD students. This suggests a rather pronounced feminisation of higher education in Finland, although that does not take into account that male PhD students still dominate in the natural sciences, computer sciences and engineering (She Figures 2012, 54-56). In 2012 women held 52% of the postdoctoral researcher and senior lecturer/researcher positions in Finland; 52% of the adjunct-, assistant- and associate professorships; but only 24% of the full professorships. Compared to most other European countries the Finnish numbers look favourable (She Figures 2012, 90). However, the progress in Finland is still very slow and it is not likely that this will be rectified any time soon (see e.g. Van den Brink & Benschop 2012). Recent socio-economic and political developments in Finland suggest that we may risk undergoing, if not a strengthening, then at least a reproduction of gender segregated academia.

Just as gender in the Finnish labour market at large resists straightforward explanation, the usual structural explanations invoked when questions of gender inequality arise in Finnish academia do not apply. Finnish women are
just as, if not more, educated as men. Women make up about half of all PhD students and thus, in principle, should be just as qualified as their male counterparts for achieving positions and rewards in Finnish academia. The earlier mentioned social policies make an individualistic double earner family model possible and women do not, it seems, have to choose between work and children (although this has been changing somewhat recently). Women are as educated as men and should therefore, in principle, receive the same salary and job offers as their male counterparts. Female academics are organised to protect their interests in terms of wage and jobs. In fact, the level of organisation in associations for female academics, such as Tutkija Naiset, increases at times when women or gender/feminist/women’s studies are structurally and institutionally under pressure from political developments and reforms, as is currently the case (for experiences from elsewhere see e.g. Moscowitz, Jett, Carney, Leech & Savage 2014; Macoun & Miller 2014).

The insights into the social organisation of gender in academia that remain on the level of discrete categories, variables, statistical indicators and structural explanations have the limitation of not allowing me to move beyond the symptoms or effects of gendering processes. They do not elucidate how such categories or structures are produced, or how the processes creating differences and hierarchy work. Understanding these processes is, however, necessary for understanding how the gender system, despite policy efforts to overcome inequality, is reproduced in new and innovative ways. Gender inequality in Finland is “like a mythical monster: when you hack off its head, it grows two others” (Rantalaiho 1997, 20).

1.5 The focus of this dissertation: concepts and choices

I have chosen to utilise Dorothy Smith’s (1987) concept of “social relations” to understand how the gender system is (re)produced and changed in the context of academia. Conceptually, “social relations” serves to explicate that structures and institutions are composed of actions. Flesh and blood people’s actual doings and sayings articulate social relations, just as the social relations in turn shape the activities of individuals - sometimes in objectifying ways that are not in their own best interest.

My empirical studies and data production – ethnographic observations, interviews and texts material collections – have been carried out at one Finnish University, Aalto University, over a three-year period. Aalto University is an interesting choice for study because it is a flagship project in the current reforms of the Finnish higher educational sector. The Aalto University merger that took place in 2010. It is unique because it is one of the first foundation-based universities in Finland and has the goal of becoming a world-class university by 2020. A number of significant changes in the HR and management practices have followed the merger, among which is the introduction of the tenure track academic career system. These changes have turned out to be interesting turning points for unpacking the gendered social organisation of the good academic in changing academia.
I have drawn on Dorothy Smith’s (2005) and colleagues (2006) method of inquiry, Institutional Ethnography, as guidance for studying this. I shall go into more detail with this methodology in the following chapter, but, for now, simply mention that one of its defining characteristics is that it takes people’s everyday doings and sayings as the point of entry for understanding social reality and its social organisation. Drawing on feminist standpoint epistemology, and thus the notion that all knowledge production is ultimately value laden and a result of historical processes and socio-political epistemic struggles, Institutional Ethnography is an explicitly political mode of inquiry. It demands taking side with particular embodied experiences and ways of knowing, against the institutional realities that silence or downplay these experiences in their textual representation.

My study of gendered social relations does not simply offer a female perspective to the study of academic work and changing academia, it is explicitly feminist. But what does this imply? As a critical philosophical tradition and political movement, feminist research seeks to uncover and question the established dominant norms, ways of knowing and structures that favour certain groups of people above others, with the aim of creating paths for (hopefully) better alternatives. This:

...implies recognizing that organizations, as core institutions of society, are centrally involved in the production and maintenance of social relations of inequality and subordination (Calas & Smircich 2008, 247).

Following the methodological procedure of Institutional Ethnography, my entry point for studying the gendered social relations of changing academia will be from a particular standpoint within the social relations. I have chosen that of junior female academics as my point of departure. This draws attention to the fact that I do not believe in any unitary experience of women. All subject experiences are unique but also shaped by one’s position within the social relations, the institutions, and how practices and relations of gender intersect with those of race, class, age and so on. I am sensitive to the fact that explicating the social relations of gender means that one cannot neatly separate these from the workings of race, class or age (Smith 2009).

1.6 Research Questions

I think of the relationship between everyday embodied activities of academics and the institutional intentions and ideals related to changing academia as being politically, historically, socially and culturally constituted. The relationship can be understood as produced, among others, via shifts in gendered social arrangements, practices and material relations.

This thesis has two research objectives. My first is to understand the new notions and textual constructs of the “ideal academic”. More specifically, I
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wish to reveal how the ideal academic is constituted in gendered material and social relations that take divergent expressions across local settings, one such being the everyday lives of junior female academics, as they are connected with and engage in ongoing coordination of activities with others within the institutional order(s) that make up changing academia. Therefore, my study is not merely restricted to illuminating the micro processes and local practices. Rather, it uses Institutional Ethnography to unpack how the local practices are shaped within the macro processes of translocal objectified social relations - also termed ruling relations. I investigate how discourses and ideologies, mediated through textualised standardised notions of quality and evaluation practices, create an image of “the ideal academic” and shape experiences and practices across diverging local settings.

The second, and closely related, research objective is to illustrate how Institutional Ethnography can be conducted. Doing research for and with people implies more than learning from their everyday experiences and work knowledge. It implies careful attention to the processes and relations that may distort such efforts i.e. hindrances to learning, understanding and grasping their experiences and knowledge. Smith has emphasised avoiding institutional capture, but, in addition to that, I claim that “preserving” the standpoint of the participant involves careful and on-going reflexivity - reflexivity in terms of the researcher’s subject position, the shifting and complex relations to research participants and the time and energy it takes to “preserve” the voices, knowledge and embodied experiences of those we study (Walby 2009). It also involves careful attention to how knowledge is co-produced within complex social relations that include relations of power (e.g. Homanen 2013) and sensitivity towards the context as well as the genre, mode or method of inquiry. Moreover, it must include attentiveness to how texts are read and interpreted differently by different people and also hold divergent shaping capabilities (e.g. Lund 2015). It is only by engaging in this that Institutional Ethnography can seriously consider the situated and context specific nature of experience without excluding the possibility of making broader claims on the basis of the generalising effects of objectified social relations. This is what makes the results of Institutional Ethnographic inquiry into gender relations within changing academia recognisable and transferable, but not generalisable, beyond the particular empirical context of my field work.

My study draws on and develops an Institutional Ethnographic perspective to learn from the experiences of junior female scholars – a perspective that is not very often taken up in studies of gender in academia (an exception is Nikunen 2014). By starting from their activities and perspectives on changing academia, I can obtain an overall picture of how they are interconnected and engaged in relations with the institutional order and other actors. Following the knowledge I garner through explicating the experiences of junior female scholars, I progress into the particular institutional sites of which they are part, and ask:
How do ruling ways of knowing gender and quality shape and organise academics in changing academia?

In order to reply to this my empirical investigations will be driven by two different, yet connected, questions:

How are gendered social relations of academic work organised and enacted among scholars in changing academia?

How are the social relations coordinated and shaped by texts in and around the practices that define and evaluate the quality and potential of academic work?

1.7 Outline of thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I outline the theoretical, epistemological and ontological foundations of Institutional Ethnography. I seek to enable the reader to develop a sense of the critique of objectification that was the point of departure for Dorothy Smith's development of Institutional Ethnography; I spell out the ontology of the social that Smith subscribes to, defined as people coordinating activities, as well as Smith's version of feminist standpoint epistemology; I then show how the social is coordinated and organised locally and translocally, and how the active text is central for understanding how these two relational modes are connected, and how coordination happens across space and time. Finally, I show what makes Institutional Ethnography significant and different from other approaches, such as the Foucaultian study of discursive practices. In chapter 3, I offer a multiple layered review from the standpoint of Institutional Ethnography. Firstly, I spell out three diverging feminist ontologies of gender and experience, and their connected epistemological strategies: liberal, Marxist/socialist and postmodernist/queer/poststructuralist. Secondly, I show some liberal feminist contributions to our understanding of gender in academia, followed by an explication of the limits of this approach both in terms of its assumptions and explanations, as well as the methods used for producing data. Thirdly, I illustrate different conceptual, theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding gender in academia and other work organisations. I show which social relations would need to be unpacked further in order to understand the significance of gender within changing capitalism and academia. Fourthly, I argue that Institutional Ethnography and its concept of ruling relations provides a possible solution to the ongoing debate between socialist/materialist/Marxist feminists and Queer/Postmodern/Post-structuralist feminists, when considering the questions of whether to invoke material or relational concept of power; the status of ideology and discourse; whether to start research from experience or an event; whether to focus on micro or macro processes; and so on. In chapter 4, I offer an outline of my data production process, dilemmas, subject positions,
standpoint, methods and analytical choices. Chapter 5 marks the first of my three empirical analytical chapters, and here I analyse the construction of the ideological code “the ideal academic” in and around the texts of a new and competitive tenure track system of academic employment. I show how particular types of academic work, such as publishing in top journals, is flagged, whereas other academic work, such as teaching, is downplayed, illustrating how these texts transport and organise certain discourses, and how it is activated in local settings and socially organised along relations of gender in ways that do not work in the interest of junior female scholars. In Chapter 6, I investigate how the ideology of becoming world class and the ideal academic is further activated through the work of boasting, the activation of language of excellence. I focus on how the boasting is socially organised, how some can legitimately engage in boasting and use it as a resource, while others cannot. I explicate how competent boasting is not only a question of what you boast about, i.e. publishing in the right places, but when, where, and indeed also how you do it, i.e. you must display that you are driven by authentic, non-instrumental, motivations and passion and not by instrumental concerns for rewards and recognition. In chapter 7, I look more at the how of the ideal academic, showing how it is not simply a question of accumulated knowledge, work experience and an ostentatious CV, but also a much more indefinable ability to display the right attitude and signal potential. I look at how the ruling relations of quality and love shape the work of writing article manuscripts. I argue that the discourse of love works against the interests of junior female scholars because it downplays the link between standardised notions of quality and excellence, defined in the texts around the ideal academic, and the status granted particular epistemic, ontological, methodological and theoretical positions. The discourses of love uphold an image of the university as a place that is more interested in knowledge than in its position on international ranking lists. In the concluding chapter 8, I summarise my findings in terms of reaching my research objectives and replying to my three research questions. Related to this I reflect on my choices, and discuss the transferability of my findings to other contexts. Finally, I discuss social relations of class, as well as the practices of resistance towards ruling ways of knowing. These grew out of my data and analysis of the “ideal academic” but were not within the scope of this thesis.
2. Institutional Ethnography

In this chapter I present an outline of Institutional Ethnography. While I turn to the methods, techniques and process of data production in Chapter 4, I will focus here on explicating the theoretical, epistemological and ontological foundations of Institutional Ethnography. These have directed and provided support for my literature review, engagement with the field, the data production process, and empirical analysis.

Institutional Ethnography (Smith 1987; Smith 2005) can best be described as a theory that “commits us not to theoretical explanations, but to certain theorized practices of looking at the actualities of everyday life” (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 17). Dorothy Smith’s sociology was developed to support empirical exploration and discovery of textually coordinated social relations within institutional processes, from the standpoint of people whose actualities and experiences have somehow been silenced or distorted in the institutional representation of them.

Discovery is usually connected to empiricism and the natural sciences, and it may seem a little strange to speak of discovering the social world. For it would seem that all social activities and structures have been uncovered, if not academically then at least in the broader media landscape. However, the fact that our world is a thoroughly mediated one, makes, as Karin Widerberg (2015) argues, the need for discovery and for drawing maps that are different from the ones we already have, even more urgent. Putting aside the theories, concepts and methods we know, at least at the early stages of knowledge production, is necessary if we wish to avoid reproducing the knowledge we already hold, and thus the society, institutions or organisational processes of which we are part. Doing Institutional Ethnography is to engage in inquiry and discovery with the purpose of bringing about social change (Widerberg 2015).

2.1 Smith’s critique of objectification in the social sciences

Smith developed Institutional Ethnography as a feminist answer to what she perceived to be a deep problem within the social (and other) sciences: that of objectification (Smith 1987; Smith 1990a; Smith 2004e). Objectification as a concept directs attention towards the research process, experiences and epistemic struggles that have been concealed in abstract descriptions of the social. While stressing that this list is not exhaustive, Smith points towards four ways in which objectification happens in the social sciences: Firstly,
treating theoretical, institutional, abstract concepts or forms as if they adequately represent and describe actual people’s _doings, sayings_ and _relations_. Connected to these is the (scientific) construction and representation of people as disconnected individual units, who have nonetheless acquired some mysterious ability to engage with one another (how this takes place and through which means remains silent in the scientific texts). Secondly, agency is granted to scientifically constructed concepts and phenomena, rather than the research participants. Thirdly, the order of presenting and selecting actual activities is structured by the scientific concepts and theories, leading to the creation of a “peculiar distance between the discursive world and the actual world”. While the discourse seems to be unaccountable to the actual, the actual is continuously held accountable to the discursive whereby “the actual becomes an expression of the discursive”. Fourthly, subject accounts are reconstructed in order to fit the theoretical and conceptual lens. This is exemplified in the selection of quotes through which “Actual subjects are entered into the text as actors in the sociologist’s narrative”. The border between the narrative of the research participant and the interpretations of the researcher become veiled. (Smith 2004e, 59-62). The following quote from Smith’s book _The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge_ (Smith 1990a) captures how these practices lead to the ongoing reproduction of knowledge, explanations, assumptions and the privileged position of the researcher and scientific discourse to define what is important and what is unimportant:

> The categories structuring data collection are already organized by predetermined schema; the data produced becomes the reality intended by the schema; the schema interprets the data [...] though it is perfectly possible to prove or disprove statements, issues of objectivity must be framed within established structure. Issues, questions, and experience that do not fit the framework and the interrelated relations of categories and schemata do not get entry to the process, do not become part of the textual realities... (Smith 1990a, 93-94)

Such practices of objectification are hard to escape since they make up the practical conventions we all learn to embody as we engage in academic activities and work within our respective academic communities (e.g. Becher & Trowler 2001). Here it should be stressed that Smith has no wish to, or ambition of, overthrowing such processes. As she puts it herself, that would be “a contradiction”. She is _not against_ theory, concepts or abstractions per se. Rather she proposes a method of inquiry by which we can examine how the social itself becomes organised by such abstractions (not only those of science, but also those related to other institutional settings) (see Smith 1992, 90; DeVault 1996). She suggests that we challenge objectifying processes by putting at the centre of discovery particular subject experiences, the particular
localities in which they work, and the particular texts they engage with and interpret.

2.2 An Ontology of the Social and Epistemic Standpoint(s)

Institutional Ethnography starts from the ontological premise that human beings are essentially social beings who engage in actual social relations involving the ongoing coordination of activities. Each activity happens in a particular local time and space, but is at the same time part of a larger sequence of action (a sequence which may not be fully visible from where we stand in our bodies) making it stretch beyond the confinement of the local sphere and bringing us into connection with people located “elsewhere/elsewhen” (Smith 2005; Smith 2006). The organisation, coordination and concertion of people’s everyday activities make up what in Institutional Ethnography is referred to as social organisation. The ambition is to map out how the social is put together “…not […] as a way of discovering the everyday world as such, but of looking out beyond the everyday to discover how it came to happen as it does” (Smith 2006, 3). The point of departure is that everything human beings engage with, and are organised by in turn, is socially constructed. Objects, such as books, tables, chairs etc., and non-human beings, such as animals and nature, are conferred meaning “by virtue of what we do with them and where, when and with whom they are used”, they “organize our activities in terms of what is possible to do with them” (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 28). The manner in which things are interpreted and used is not fixed, but malleable over time and space and depending on the standpoint from which they are engaged.

This ontology has consequences for what and how it can be known, the epistemology, and, ultimately, for the ways in which knowledge is produced. Since the world and the meanings ascribed to it are socially constituted, i.e. a product of people engaging in ongoing negotiations/struggles and coordination of activities, this is the focus of my knowledge production endeavours, and indeed, has consequences for what I hold to be knowable. Rather than revealing true inner feelings, the institutional ethnographer looks to document actual people’s everyday experiences and embodied practical activities. This approach does not simply seek to “bridge” mind and body, but rather to, in a Merleau-Pontyan sense, “collapse” the very distinction (Smith 2005, 24). Collapsing this dichotomy is a necessity for engaging with and making sense of people as being radically entangled with the world; for making sense of their experiences as formed within social relations.

Epistemologically Institutional Ethnography is situated within Standpoint feminism, holding that all knowledge production is political and embedded in historical struggles and processes. However, as Dorothy Smith (Smith 1997, 392) observes in her reply to Susan Hekman in the 1997 Signs debate, one should not make the mistake of thinking Standpoint Feminists are univocal. As Smith notes, this is a “coherence invented for us” and thus one that
“distorts” the “reality”9 of their differences. I will therefore clarify how I read and have come to distinguish between Smith and other proponents of standpoint feminism.

Common among standpoint feminists is the insistence that knowledge production must take its point of departure in “situated knowledges” and “actualities” (Smith 1987; Haraway 1988; Harding 1993; 1995; 2007) of those whose perspectives are somehow excluded from dominant discourses, institutions and ways-of-knowing. Such a basis provides the point of entry for making visible and de-naturalising the taken-for-granted order of things, hierarchies and structures that offer default privilege to certain people and perspectives, while simultaneously excluding and downplaying others. In opposition to the claims of some (e.g. Hekman 1997; Fawcett & Hearn 2004), the standpoint feminism of Smith does not grant an automatic epistemic advantage to women. Thus, who might help or enable me to scrutinize the order of things from a new perspective is “neither automatic nor all encompassing” (Wylie 2003, 37). The epistemic justification always refers to a particular context in which particular “assumptions are likely to function as default entitlements” because they are hard to challenge (Rolin 2006, 135).

Instead of starting, as Sandra Harding suggests, from a predefined social position or category such as gender, sex, class or race, the institutional ethnographer establishes a “subject position” (Smith 2005, 9). This signifies a development within Smith’s body of work, which began from and remained a wish to “Talk back to Sociology” (DeVault 1996). In the wake of the Feminist Consciousness raising movement, Smith developed an alternative methodology for feminist knowledge by starting from “women’s experience” (Smith 1987). However, “Subsequent developments would reveal the complex fragilities and resiliencies of this construction, which Donna Haraway characterises as “a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind” (DeVault 1996, 30). Consequently, Smith developed a Standpoint of People (Smith 2005). Indeed, it would seem that starting from predetermined or universalising categories, not unlike the insightful claims of e.g. Judith Butler, is, in itself, participation in “conceptual practices of power” that Institutional Ethnography seeks to scrutinise and denaturalise (Smith 1990a; Smith 2004). “Conceptual practices of power” are defined by Smith as “accounts of the world that treat it selectively in terms of a predetermined conceptual framework” (Smith 1990a, 93). Predetermined categories such as women and men, offer the risk of blinding us to actual embodied activities, experiences and knowledge, thus leading to objectifying accounts of people and the social. Such categorical points of departure hold the potential of neglecting the overlapping experiences that may exist across social categories, e.g. mothers and fathers; white and black feminists. Moreover, the categorical fixation can blind us to how social relations are exactly relational. That is, both men and women do masculinity and femininity, and dominant notions of femininity and

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9 Reality or “the actual” is meant in Smith’s writing “like the arrow on the map of the mall saying “you are here” that points in the text to a beyond-the-text in which the text, its reader, and its concepts also are” (Smith 1997, 393).
masculinity, as well as political activist programmes and agendas for transformation of the gendered hierarchies, change over time and place. Indeed, these will always be sites of negotiation, contestation, change and conflict. Predetermined categorisations would make me insensitive to such dynamics.

The standpoint established by the institutional ethnographer is, in principle, “open for everyone” and a position intended for directing attention to particular problems or questions in the institutional or ruling order (Smith 2005, 9). Whether someone can direct my attention cannot be assumed (e.g. on the basis of their belonging to a particular gender, sex, race or class category). This must be discovered by commencing the investigation from the everyday actualities of people’s lives and work, and how this is coordinated and connected to activities of other people located elsewhere/elsewhen (Smith 2005). Making the “subject position” my point of entry allows me to be sensitive towards the particularity of experiences without resuming to methodological individualism:

Each person will know the setting from participating differently in its social relations and will therefore each have their own organized standpoint. How different participants understand their setting, their work, etc., will therefore not necessarily coincide (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 65)

2.3 Two relational modes of social organising: the local and the translocal

It is from the clarification of concrete everyday practices that I can begin to discover tensions or disjunctures between the concrete subject experience/activity and its social representations. Building on a unique (and somewhat controversial) reinterpretation of Marx’ epistemology (Smith 2004b) Smith asserts that people should be treated as knowers...

Speaking from experience speaks from the only site of consciousness – in an individual’s own living, and hence as it is, and must be, embedded and active in social relations and organization that are not contained in what people can speak of directly. Experience, as spoken, is always social and always bears its social organization. A sociology for people proposes to explore from experience but goes beyond it, beginning in the living as people can speak of it rather than in the pre-givens of theoretically designed discourse. Discourse itself, and other dimensions of the objectified organization of corporations, government, professions, etc., are themselves understood as being ‘in the living’ and hence investigable as people’s actual practices [...] This is a social ontology not of
meaning but of concerting of activities that actually happen. (Smith 2004, 96-97)

A central dimension and starting point within this approach is Smith’s generous definition of work (not unlike that of Pierre Bourdieu). In this context, work is not to be understood as an activity resulting in some sort of monetary compensation, as we tend to understand it in the West, rather it is to be understood as the mundane everyday activities that take time and effort, and sometimes stress, worry and anxiety. Activities that encompass all the things people do, through compliance or resistance, when they participate in and (re)produce a given social and institutional order, practice and social organisation. (Smith 2005, 229; see also Bourdieu 1998, 64-65).

The institution or the institutional is defined as:

...a complex of relations forming part of the ruling apparatus, organized around a distinctive function – education, health care, law and the like. In contrast to such concepts as bureaucracy, ‘institution’ does not identify a determinate form of social organization, but rather the intersection and coordination of more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus” (Smith 1987, 160)

The local relational modes of organisation are “hooked into” a coordination that happens translocally: beyond and across specific localities (Smith 2005). While the local is the immediate site of our experience, activities and embodied work knowledge, some of the translocal social relations “that organize and regulate our lives in contemporary society” operate in objectified forms. Such objectified forms are depicted in Smith’s concept of ruling relations (see 2004c, 73), developed through a reinterpretation of Marx (2004b; 2004c; 1990a). They are:

...text-mediated and text-based systems of ‘communication’, ‘knowledge’, ‘information’, ‘regulation’, ‘control’ and the like. The functions of ‘knowledge, judgment, and will’ that Marx saw as wrested from the original ‘producer’ and transferred to capital become built into a specialized complex of objectified forms of organization and relationship [...] Knowledge, judgment, and will are less and less properties of the individual subject and more and more of objectified organization. They are constituted as actual forms of concerting and concerted activities and can be investigated as such. ‘Objectivity’, the focus of postmodern critique, is only one form of objectification, though objectified organization relies extensively on text-mediated virtual realities [...] Social consciousness exists now as a complex of externalized or objectified social relations through which people’s everyday/everynight activities organize and coordinate contemporary society [...] The concept of the ruling relations
identifies a historical development of forms of social consciousness that can no longer be adequately conceived as arising in the life conditions of actual individuals (Smith 2004c, 77-78).

To study the ruling relations involves the empirical explication of how particular social relations become abstracted, objectified and stabilised in texts, concepts, measures and procedures for work. The ruling relations are empirically observable as forms of social organisation. The goal is “examining and explicating how “abstractions” are put together, with concepts, knowledge, facticity, as socially organized practices” (Smith 1992, 90).

Thus, the concept of ruling relations is both material and relational. The former because the ruling relations operate across place and time in an objectifying manner, coordinating activities and interaction. In this sense, the concept orients the researcher towards definite forms of social organisation, including discourses and ideologies, within which people perform their work. The latter because the ruling is something that happens through people’s embodied activation of the texts, concepts, standards, procedures and measures they mediate. It is a particular notion of power, which cannot be reduced to “relations of domination or hegemony” (Smith 2004c, 79), yet involves a:

...complex and massive coordinating of people’s work. Intensions, desires, opportunities, impediments, blockages, and powerlessness arise within them. [It establishes] agency, that is, textually specified capacities to control and modify the work of others (Smith 2005, 183)

2.4 Language as coordinator and the active text

As outlined above, Institutional Ethnography defines the social as people coordinating activities. Smith draws on a particular understanding of language as an activity that coordinates other activities. Because the interest is directed towards actual activities and practices, the focus is not on people’s psyche, nor is it on language as a self-contained phenomenon or independent system such as that postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). Rather, attention is drawn to language as being inseparable from the social. In accordance with her social constructionist ontology, the act of naming (the word) is always in the process of becoming within an interindividual territory; one involving bodily interaction and senses. Language or the word does not signify something that already exists out there, but rather objects and experiences are given meaning as speaker and hearer engage in coordinating their consciousness: the word and the act of naming our experiences is, and arises out of, a “two-sided act” (Volosinov 1973 [1929]).

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10 Which is not to be confused or equated with Alfred Schutz’ intersubjectivity!
Smith both complements and expands on Volosinov’s notion of the word as a two-sided act by using G. H. Mead’s (1934) theory of language, or the significant symbol. This theory builds the social into language and meaning, with the distinction between word/signifier and concept/object/signified losing its relevance. Language for Mead is an actual activity involving vocal gestures (words) that, in turn, activate possible responses in speaker and hearer. What are considered possible responses is based on experiences that people have; experiences that are always, as we recall, organised socially. Gestures are understood as actions interrupted by a response to them: gestures are defined by the response. The vocal gesture or the word, conversely, is granted meaning by the responses activated in speaker as listener, or writer and reader, which indicate the word or vocal gesture holds the same meaning to both parties. The significant symbol then comes “into being only in the social act in which their consciousness is coordinated through a vocal gesture for which the responses are the same for those participating”; which, however, does not mean that there is not space for misunderstanding or misinterpretation. These notions presuppose “that the speaker knows what the hearer should have heard”. This is a prerequisite for conversation (Smith 2005, 81 and 82).

The interindividual territory as organiser of experiences is further expanded with A.R. Luria’s (1961) theory of the verbal generalisation system, understood as the manner in which the word “abstracts and systematizes” experience, subjugating the particular to generalised verbal forms. Smith illustrates this with the example of how the word “dog”, within the interindividual territory, comes to signify and generalise very different experiences of the domestic canine. The word comes to organise our perceptions, and we learn to recognise or identify them as all being dogs despite differences in appearance, our different experiences, and different positions in relation to them. In this way the word describes as well as constructs a given object: the word and the object are not fully independent of each other (Smith 2005, 83). The text and the word highlights something beyond-the-text where the word and text also lives/is activated.

In the previous section I distinguished between social- and ruling relations. In this section I have thus far primarily considered how Smith theorises language as integral to social relations and coordination. Smith’s concept of ruling relations has been defined in the previous section as objectified text based social organising. Bakhtin’s (2010 [1986]) speech genres embrace the heteroglossic nature of communities/societies and are helpful for distinguishing between forms of interindividual territories. The genre of speech modifies how interindividual territories are socially organised. He distinguishes between primary and secondary genres: Primary speech genres refer to direct experience and experience based conversation, while the secondary refers to written experience and conversation. In the primary speech genre, everyday interaction is grounded in local activities and relations; there is a community of experience/interpretive practices, a world in common, and its members are familiar with the particular socially organised embodied
practices with which a given word is meant to refer. Activities and relationships are of a definite and particular character and they happen in a specific time and place; people engage in symbolic coordination from their bodily base or null-point (Schutz 1962) within this world-in-common. The secondary speech genre is the written experience. Experience based writing involves the writers’ ability to activate their experience so that the reader can make sense of what is written. Therefore, this genre is itself experientially based, and, as the reader activates the written text, an interindividual territory is created. Smith contributes to Bakhtin with an additional text-based interindividual territory. This differs from the secondary speech genre in that it captures the type of speech that is objectifying, generalising, abstracted, happening in textual time, and positioning the speaker or listener, writer and reader, outside their bodily null-point and experience. It is only in indirect ways connected to our everyday actualities. Experience cannot be fully displaced in text-based talk as it is needed to comprehend and interpret it, however it involves specific resources. The reader or listener must engage in making intra- and intertextual connections to be able to know what it is about, what it refers to and what it means. The community around text-based speech, often found in concrete texts such as newspapers, is interpretive and imagined. Yet, in other forms of speech, there is an ongoing negotiation and/or struggle between speaker and listener or writer and reader, making up the interindividual territory. This is textual rather than experience based: the reader and listener cannot negotiate with the text, but must activate it and act on behalf of it, giving the text agency within their own local actuality. For that reason the textual reality seems to share the same world as its reader or listener; transmitting, influencing, coordinating and organising their experience-based reality (Smith 2005, 86-94).

Expanding further on her notion of text-based realities, Smith also draws on Michel Foucault’s (1970) conceptualisation of discourse, which constitutes one dimension of the ruling relations. Discourses are often text mediated, distinctive abstracted or objectified social relations wrested from local time and place, now existing in textual time, prior to a particular saying and doing, regulating and coordinating that very saying and doing. This does not mean that people’s consciousness and utterances are caused by discourses. As Smith puts it, a given discourse cannot always “speak” our experiences (Smith 2005, 17-18). While Smith takes up Foucault’s and the poststructuralist emphasis on language and discourse, she departs from it. Smith insists on preserving the “analytical significance of an embodied and agentic subject in a material world” considering language not only necessary for making sense of the world, but a link between people and to a shared material world: language, concepts and discourse make up a significant part in the ongoing coordination of social relations (DeVault 2013, 333; Smith 2004d).

Thus Texts play a central role in the understanding of how social coordination and organisation happens:
They regulate and coordinate beyond the particular local setting of their reading and writing. But they are always occurrences in time and space: they happen; they are constituents and organizers of actions and courses of action; they are activated at a particular moment of reading [or writing] in the time it takes to do that reading and in a particular place. The act of reading is very deceitful in this respect; it conceals its particularity, its being in time and place. Reading is experienced as a course of action within the text and in textual time. The reading subject is subordinated in the act of reading to the dimensionality of the text. For this reason, it is difficult to recognize that the text and its reading are always also in actual time and place and that texts activated in a course of reading are always in the actual and being read in ‘real time’ (Smith 2004c, 80).

The texts (understood as material and replicable – whether books, written documents, pictures, CDs, websites etc.) are all mediators and carriers of ruling relations in the local: “It is the materiality of the text that connects the local setting at the moment of reading into the non-local relations that it bears” (Smith 2004c, 79).

In some regards this understanding diverges from Roland Barthes’, who held that the meaning of the text arrives only at the point of the subject’s reading of it, thereby discarding the significance of (some) texts’ material and concrete presence. Instead, Smith suggests that the materiality of the text and the particular interpretive practices of the reader (acquired through the reader’s participation in an intertextual complex, a discursive site, a formal organisation, and particular local sites and place within the social relations) should be amalgamated. People do engage in different interpretive practices; but the text (or at least the particular types of organisational and standardising texts, e.g. evaluation forms; computer tracking systems) is also a definite entity, that carries with it particular social organisational intentions or logic, and this is what enables it to operate across several local sites of work.

The notion that certain institutional and organizational texts hold a form of agency-free intention, comprises Smith’s contribution to Mead’s theory of people as active in constituting the social and its social organisation (Mead 1934). Through what Smith terms the “Text-Reader conversations” we can comprehend the way in which a person’s engagement with and activation of a text anchor the discourses or ruling ways-of-knowing in their local actualities. The reader must activate and interpret the text, because the text does not respond.

Spoken conversations take shape as each speaker responds to the other, whereas in text-reader conversations, one side is fixed and nonresponsive to the other; the other party takes on the text, in a sense becoming its voice – even, as we shall see, its “agent” – and at the same time, responds to, interprets, and acts from it […] The constancy of the text is also key to the effect of institutional standardization across multiple local sites of people’s work. (Smith 2005, 105 and 108)
The particular concepts and vocabulary within such institutional texts organise the reading. Deciphering them involves the activation of interpretive practices and placing oneself in relation to them, either as an insider or outsider, to the order they represent. When encountering the institutional discourse as mediated through the text, Smith argues, we often find that the subject or agent’s concrete embodied experience is suppressed or displaced in favour of its institutional representation. The particularity of time and space in which a reading of the text must necessarily take place, is often muted: “Sequence is recognized, but it is internal to the text and doesn't happen in time”. However, the fact that institutional discourse shapes our activities across space and time and through that process downplays particularities of lived experience, does not mean that institutional discourse and texts’ intentions should be seen as “prescribing actions”. Rather, we might see them as “providing the terms under which people become institutionally accountable” (Smith 2005, 113)

2.5 The significance of Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography involves, questioning taken for granted representations, knowledge and practices, and carving space for hitherto downplayed experiences, perspectives and voices within the social relations. Through doing this, it is possible to offer new maps of the social. It draws our attention to the ruling relations of research and knowledge production, and those relations coordinating and organising people's everyday activities and their engagement others. The coordination of subject activities and relations between subjects is mediated, amongst other ways, discursively, “culturally”, historically, professionally, epistemically. Participants are treated as active subjects and agents of knowledge, which is significant for avoiding objectification. The researcher learns from, with and for the participants how the social is organised and categorised. Calling our ways of knowing into question involves questioning our ability to make others knowable (see e.g. Chio 2005); and, indeed, in my case, as researcher, being aware of myself as equally shaped within social- and ruling relations. The interest is in how people are rendered knowable and known, and is comparable and measurable through abstractions. We investigate how a person’s articulation of self, of events, of knowledge and suchlike are organised by and within discourses and institutional concepts, categories and ways of knowing.

Institutional Ethnography begins from issues and problems that are real for people and that originate from their relationship to a particular institutional order (Griffith & Smith 2005) rather than from the standpoint of an objectifying theory and theoretical discourse. This creates opportunities for enquiries that would make a difference to the everyday working life. Despite this, Institutional Ethnography is not identical to Participatory Research or Action Research. Institutional Ethnography’s particular understanding of power as ruling relations is central to understand this difference. In
Institutional Ethnography the research subjects’ active participation in defining the research focus is not considered an solution to the exercise of power in research. From the perspective of Institutional Ethnography, participation does not necessarily make the relation between the researched and the researcher less asymmetrical (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 68). Indeed, ideals of equality in the research relations may themselves be ideological constructs. The question of equality in the research process may be subject of constant negotiation and struggle between researcher and research subjects, and may be unachievable due to other research relations, priorities and responsibilities (see e.g. Wolf 1996; Campbell & Gregor 2004; Homanen 2012). The approaches are in accordance, however, insofar as they consider knowledge to be created from a specific standpoint and that knowledge production with and for people involves attending to and taking seriously the subject positions and relation between researcher and research participant.

The focus on standpoints and subject experience is not based on an interest in accessing true inner feelings, but rather on how careful attention to people's everyday activities offer a foundation towards illuminating how experience became organised. But how does Institutional Ethnography then differ from Foucaultian analysis of power and how subjects are shaped discursively? Smith has not critiqued Foucault himself, but rather the many applications of his notion of discourse for ignoring the active subject, that is, for disregarding the subjects who use, (re)produce them and take up the concepts and notions the discourses distribute. As earlier demonstrated the notion of discourse, as defined by Foucault (1970), is a central aspect of the ruling relations. Institutional Ethnography does not depart from Foucaultian discourse analysis (e.g. Riad 2005) in that it also investigates how discourses become naturalised, assume a position of truth which cannot easily be contested, and organise people's knowledge and activities (Riad 2005; Scott 2003). Institutional Ethnography does, however, depart in other respects. Aside from the fact that it, unlike Foucault, also takes ideologies and ideological codes into account, Institutional Ethnography, as shown, has a different understanding of subject experience and activity. Foucault understands 'experience' as something that is done to us rather than by us in a particular place and time. With experience always being in the process of becoming, it therefore does not, according to Foucault, provide a useful entry point. Instead of this, we should start from an event which offers us a glimpse into and a starting point for investigating the assumed reality (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer & Thaning 2009; see also Lund & Tienari 2015). In contrast to a Foucaultian approach to discourses, the focus is not on historical processes, the dominating concepts and “a large scale conversation in and through texts” (DeVault & McCoy 2006). That is, limited to “the exploration of the construction of and relations between discourses and discursive practices [...] that construct the subjectivity [of a given group of individuals]” (Satka & Skehill 2012, 194, 199).

Institutional Ethnography suggests that our knowledge of the social should be grounded in and begin from everyday problems, issues, and disjunctures experienced by socially situated agents. It holds that we can gain entrance into
the taken-for-granted order of things exactly through people’s experiences of engaging with and activating texts and the ruling relations (and the disjuncture that arises when a particular institutional discourse cannot be used to express an experience and that experience thereby becomes silenced).

Institutional Ethnography draws explicitly on ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, methodological Marxism and social phenomenology. “Preserving”, or perhaps more appropriately, “constituting” the subject as agent and active participants in the social- and ruling relations. This should be conducted in a way that does not lose sight of the fact that divergence and difference is central to this method of inquiry. This becomes the point of departure for making sense of how difference is coordinated and “generates divergence in coordinated human interaction” (Satka & Skehill 2012, 199). Institutional Ethnography not only allows a phenomenon to be explored from multiple perspectives, but also demands the researcher to take sides in the study – it is an explicitly political mode of inquiry (Campbell & Gregor 2004; Smith 2005). To paraphrase, Foucault’s approach provides tools by which we can study how people’s knowledge and subjectivities are constructed in objectifying discourses. Smith’s approach focuses on and makes visible the subjects as agents and active participants in the ruling relations that govern the institutions and organisations within which they work.

Institutional Ethnography is ethnographic research with the purpose of explaining processes and describing, analysing and making visible the ways in which everyday life is organised. Institutional Ethnography departs from traditional forms of ethnography in that it does not confine itself to one local setting. This enables us to investigate how local activities are shaped within translocal processes, within social and ruling relations. Smith’s particular theorisation of text is what makes the translocal ethnographically observable in the local - this is usually ascribed to abstract and objectifying theories about “the system”, “the patriarchy”, “the political”, “the economic”, “the national”, or indeed, “the cultural”. In this unique way, Institutional Ethnography challenges the dualism between micro-macro and structure-action, which is often problematic within social sciences.

In the following two chapters I will review the existing literature within feminist studies of organizations and academia from the standpoint of institutional ethnography, and then explicate the data production process.
3. Interrogating gender theorising and literature on gender in academia

In this dissertation I wish to propose a particular feminist standpoint epistemology: a particular method of inquiry and the specific ontology of the social; and a conceptual framework explicating gender as social relations. In doing this, I hope to demonstrate how Institutional Ethnography can be useful for “enacting a more relevant feminist ‘organisation studies’ (Calas & Smircich 2006, 286). This mode of inquiry would be beneficial to those voices who are often downplayed in dominant theory and in the institutional and organisational processes that distort and hide actual experience and practices, whilst claiming to represent them.

My aim is to explore the gendered social relations of the “ideal academic” in changing academia. I will elaborate the different ontological and epistemological positions utilised in theorising gender. Moreover, I will clarify the problematic disjunctures (that is, the mismatch between theoretical representations and actual experience) arising from the ontological assumptions these positions are based on and the epistemological strategies that follow. In doing this, I will demonstrate how Institutional Ethnography, through the concept of ruling relations, highlights a possible solution to the debate between Socialist and Postmodern feminists. This is achieved by providing ways in which we can understand experiences and gendered social relations as being shaped discursively and ideologically, as well as materially; as shaped in local/micro and translocal/macro processes. Furthermore, I interrogate feminist contributions to the study of academia and organisations and offer suggestions for further unpacking gendered social relations are organised within changing academia.

3.1 Theorising Gender: Ontological and Epistemological positions

Gender scholars have contributed from a plurality of ontological, epistemological and theoretical perspectives to understanding dynamics and power relations of organisations and academia from gender and feminist perspectives. (see e.g. Calas & Smircich 2006 and 2008). Each tradition grew out of particular historical processes, social and political contexts; contexts and processes, which, in turn, both enabled and limited critique and possibilities for social transformation. The traditions differ in terms of the ontological status granted to gender and experience, and, consequently, the epistemological strategies differ.
Different typologies of feminist traditions exist, without any specific way of “categorising” them. Adopting the ideas from Marta Calas & Linda Smircich (2006), which, in turn, are derived from Sandra Harding, I will, adding a few nuances, here distinguish between three traditions. It is not necessarily clear or easy to make these distinctions as they overlap in many respects, nonetheless, they serve as a good point of departure for clarifying contributions and reviewing them from the standpoint of Institutional Ethnography. In the first group Calas & Smircich place liberal, radical and psychoanalytical feminist theory; in the second, socialist and some strands of transnational feminist theory; and finally, the third encompasses postmodernist, queer, poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist approaches (Calas & Smircich 2006, 249-250).

The feminists delineated as liberal, existentialist, radical or psycho-analytical, assume “equal social status of men and women as human beings” and hold that gender equity is the path that will ultimately lead to economic and social parity between men and women. Inequality is something that exists between two categories of people – male and female – and is principally denoted by biological characteristics. However, these strands of feminist thought also include a distinction between biological sex and social/cultural gender. While the Liberals have focused on socialisation into sex/gender roles; the Radical or Cultural feminists have focused on documenting those cultural practices that have placed male values (e.g. autonomy, domination, war, rationality, competition) as being considered superior to female values (e.g. absence of hierarchy, nature, the body, peace, connection, emotion) in the institutions of contemporary society. Another group of radical feminists, known as Difference feminists (e.g. Catherine A. MacKinnon or Shulamith Firestone), have rejected the position of the Cultural feminists as essentialist instead have focused more on the social construction of gender under patriarchal power structures. Psychoanalytic feminists have suggested that gender differences and inequalities result from experiences in the earliest stages of life (e.g. through a feminist reinterpretation of Freud’s reading of the Oedipus complex).11

Secondly, Marxist and Materialist 12 or Socialist feminists and related transnational approaches have theorised gender as arising less from biology and experience, and more as a result of historical relational processes among people embedded in patriarchal capitalist 13 societies (i.e. capitalism and patriarchy provide the material basis for inequality and oppression). Gender is part of a dynamic and contested relational process within the “material production of social inequalities”. When particular ideologies, practices and processes, e.g. within societal institutions, achieve a taken-for-granted status,

11 To be fair, within the post-modernist/poststructuralist feminist camp there are also psychoanalytical thinkers such as French philosopher Luce Irigaray, or the Bulgarian/French Yulia Kristeva. These draw more on and develop Lacan’s model of psycho-sexual development. I will not, however draw on psychoanalytical thinking in my work and shall therefore not go in further depth here.

12 British and French Marxist feminists preferred naming themselves Materialist feminists, in order to make explicit the need for adapting Marxism to explain the sexual division of labour. The term was coined by Christine Delphy and Rosemary Hennessy.

13 Marxist feminists emphasise the capitalist political-economic processes and class struggle; Socialist and Materialist feminists emphasise a dual analysis of patriarchal and capitalist structures.
gendered oppression, subordination and divisions of labour are produced and reproduced in society and become difficult to alter.

Finally, the post-colonial and poststructuralist approaches understand gender as “discursive processes and practices” and seek to destabilise gender, and our understanding of it, by criticising approaches that locate gender in ‘experience’. In contrast to this, they suggest that gender is something that is always, through its linguistic, historical and political construction, in the process of becoming. Accordingly, this position questions whether gender even has any ontological status (e.g. Butler 1990, 1993 and 1997). Analysis of large translocal/transnational structures and institutions – such as gender discourses, ideologies and dynamics within of capitalism or patriarchy – are problematized and replaced by analysis of micro level local institutions.

What implications do the ontological status granted to gender and experience have for epistemological (and, indeed, methodological) strategies? Calas & Smircich (2008) distinguish between three feminist epistemological strands: empiricism, standpoint theory, and postmodernism. All share the basic premise that there is no such thing as disinterested knowledge, and that gender is “part of the social situation of the knowing subject”. They do, however, differ in respect to the strategies they draw from it.

Feminist empiricists argue that, by making explicit how all knowledge is embodied, and by including those groups that have traditionally been silenced in knowledge production, we can produce less biased and more ‘objective’ knowledge claims. Given that all science is based on particular value orientations, facts and values cannot be separated, as traditionally sought in positivist scientific approaches. Feminist empiricists call for making the values that direct the research process explicit. In this way the premises for the analysis and conclusions can be made objects for scrutiny and challenge, rather than remain unquestioned behind claims of truth and scientific objectivity (Calas & Smircich 2008).

Standpoint feminists consider knowledge production to be an essentially contested domain. Knowledge production occurs within particular historical, political and social processes and power struggles. Mainstream theorising, knowledge production and claims of truth are inherently entwined with dominant ideologies. In time, these ways of knowing become “common sense”, the basis of false consciousness and play a significant role in the reproduction of the status quo within theory development and oppressive practices in everyday life. Standpoint feminists believe that knowledge production reflects “embodied experience under specific historical and material conditions”. This insight formed the basis of a feminist critique of academic knowledge production as being based on and favouring masculine ways of knowing, experience and theorising (see e.g. Harding 1991; Haraway 1997; Widerberg 2003): showing how mainstream dominant knowledge production was produced by men for men, for whites by whites, for the privileged by the privileged. In speaking back to the masculine knowledge production standpoint feminists suggest that we, by granting epistemic privilege to groups that have been disadvantaged and excluded from dominant knowledge claims
and epistemologies we may be able to “correct” our knowledge of the social world and establish socio-political change. This strategy was developed by Sandra Harding in what she called ‘Strong Objectivity’ (Harding 1993).

Finally, the feminist postmodernist strategy is critical of the very foundations of the two former strategies, based, as they are, on the grand narratives of political Liberalism or Marxism. The grand narratives, postmodernists claim, reproduce positivist, universal, and, therefore, masculinist and colonialist notions of knowledge production. Gender is produced and reproduced through the very processes of producing knowledge, e.g. in theory, research, political, organisational and managerial discourse. The strategy must therefore be to deconstruct our knowledge in order to reveal how particular knowledge has achieved status as a natural or incontestable truth. This includes questioning the very notion of (women’s) ‘experience’ since that is based on the assumption that there exists a fixed and stable subject. The subject, including their gendered identity and agency, is rather to be understood as a linguistically and historically constituted product, and therefore as continuously negotiated, manifold and in the process of becoming. Through deconstruction we can reveal how the subject is constructed in a particular context and make sense of how this very construction is part of maintaining forms of inequality. The deconstructive strategy helps us call into question and destabilise dominant ways of knowing and critique gender and sex (gender and sex cannot be separated – they are both discursive) binaries, cultural sexism/homophobia/ racism and essentialising. It is a valuable strategy because it draws attention to the manner in which borders are policed, and internal complexities and overlapping concerns between groups are downplayed. Moreover, this entails rejection of the notion that we can access any “extra-discursive realm” (e.g. experience) that would provide a basis for formulating coherent and unified collective goals and interests (e.g. for the feminist movement), meaning that this position seldom offers concrete political goals and alternatives, but rather focuses on the democratisation of processes (Alsop, Fitzsimmons & Lennon 2002, 106).

3.2 Unpacking social relations of gender in academia

I have already showed above, there are various feminist approaches to theorising and producing knowledge about gender. I will now illustrate and problematize these positions by interrogating them from the perspective of Institutional Ethnography. Moreover, I will demonstrate how the gendered social relations should to be further unpacked for understanding the social organisation of the ideal academic in changing academia.

3.2.1 The limits of the Liberal feminist perspective on academia

Traditionally, scholars interested in gender in organisations and in academia have worked from an essentially explicit Liberal feminist perspective. Rooted in the liberal political tradition it adheres to the value of universal abstract individualism and the belief that the good society is one that allows for
individuals to exercise their autonomy and “fulfil themselves” through a system of rights (see e.g. Jaggar 1983). The aim, as initially propagated by intellectuals such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) and John Stuart Mill (1869), was to demonstrate that women, as fully human, are deserving of the same rights, opportunities, and responsibilities as men. However, such thinkers did not question the gendered subtext underlying the very notion of universal abstract individuality. The focus of such studies in the context of studies on organisations and academia has been on “women vis a vis “men” theorised as distinct and relatively coherent groups. The point of departure is the assumption that the society, the economy, its institutions and organisations are unproblematic, gender/sex neutral: all people have equal access to these insofar as they have equal merits. Gender inequity, illustrated in the vertical and horizontal gender segregation of most societies, is a result of socialised stereotypes, patterns of thinking and behaviour whereby women position themselves, or are positioned, as secondary to men. The solution to such inequities can largely be found in a combination of formal rights, individual awareness and scrutiny of the socialisation they have been subjected to and a correction of their actions, priorities and modes of thinking. (see Calas & Smircich 2006).

From this perspective, studies and analysis of academia and organisations have often (though not always) been based on positivist epistemologies and quantitative surveying. A sex-categorised person replies to predefined questions within a predefined reply structure on a five-point Likert scale or other reply techniques. Studies of organisations and academia from the Liberal feminist perspective usually fall into three categories: psychological/individual level research, Sociological and structural research, and Functionalist studies of ‘the organisation/academia within the broader social system’ (see Calas & Smircich 2006).

Psychological/individual level studies have frequently compared men and women’s different views on work, family and related time-use issues in order to explain why fewer women climb the academic career ladder. Such studies have illustrated how gender inequalities persist because organisational members tend to evaluate and compare themselves to people they consider similar to themselves. The similarity may be in terms of gender, sex, race, ethnicity and age, but also in terms of department, rank, and duties (Valian, 1999). In gender segregated contexts such as academia:

...the likelihood that men will compare their own routine practices, aspirations and levels of compensation with those of other men, and that women will compare their own practices and so forth primarily with those of other women, is very high” and “[w]hom one perceives to be relevant when assessing personal decisions, accomplish-ments and work-related rewards, in turn, influences whether a person views personal strategies for career success as normal and sufficient. (Bird 2011, 209).
As a result, women’s tendency to compare themselves to other women when deciding whether their career aspirations, accomplishments and rewards are good enough keeps them locked in their subordination.

Other studies convey how inequalities arise from the gendered division of labour in the home. Elizabeth O’Laughlin & Lisa Bischoff (2005), for instance, studied women in dual-career two-parent families (n.b. these results cannot be generalised to all academic parents). They found that women feel particularly pressured when it comes to simultaneously fulfilling their twin roles as parent and academic. Furthermore, women would report spending more time on care-work in the home than their male partners. The act of juggling the roles as parent and academic is challenging for both sexes, but more so for women. Despite academic work allowing for flexible work schedules, the flip side of the coin is that the work not completed in the formal working hours is often conducted at home - in the evenings, weekends and during holidays. These, supposed leisure hours, are not so easily available for one who takes the primary responsibility for child care, cooking, cleaning and laundry. The level of conflict and stress can lead to depression, low self-esteem, decreased job satisfaction and commitment, and less satisfaction with one’s parental and family role. Family related stress is closely correlated with work related stress. This leads not only to lower quality in work performance, but ultimately also to many women opting out of academia being denied tenure or other promotions. (O’Laughlin & Bischoff 2005; see also Rafnsdottir & Heijstra 2013).

Sociological, structural and social system research integrates such psychological/behavioural/individual level explanations into a macro perspective. A wealth of EU reports and analyses show that women are more likely than their male partners to take parental leave and part-time positions in order to ensure a work-life balance. This is also the case in countries where there are ‘family friendly’ policies in place (EU 2005; EU 2009). Within the context of academia this means that women spend more years gathering merits, or reaching the so-called ‘academic age’, that will offer them promotion, salary increase and tenure. This is increasingly problematized in a time of demographic changes where age-based discrimination, as a result of the increased competition for young recruits on the labour market, is both widespread and increasing (EU 2009a; OECD 2006; Sennett 2006). It is not unlikely, however, that the gender gap resulting from this would change if men were more actively involved in care work (Duvander et al 2005). A comparative quantitative study of father and parental leave in the Nordic countries showed, for instance, that fathers’ use of parental and paternal leave days per year increased considerably between 1990 and 2007, as a result of women friendly and progressive fatherhood policies (Haataja 2009). However, such statistical studies does not offer insight into “how fathers use their days [...] how long

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14 Family friendly policies are here defined as policies that promote “the reconciliation of work and family life, ensure the adequacy of family resources, enhance child development, facilitate parental choice about work and care, and promote gender equity in employment opportunities” (OECD 2007, 13).

15 Although it should be made clear that parental leave policies are composed very differently across the Nordic countries, and therefore difficult to compare
they actually look after their child on their own, and how long they act as co-carers” (Haataja 2009, 18-19).

Gender divisions of labour have been instrumental in explaining salary differences between men and women. Men, overall, earn more than women, resulting in women’s lower pension savings and higher risk of poverty (EU 2013). The lower salary of women, at least in the context of academia, is partly explained by the fact that there are fewer women in the top and most lucrative positions. This is partly the result of women undertaking a significant proportion of part time positions in order to perform unpaid caring responsibilities at home (and elsewhere). Furthermore, it has also been suggested that there are gendered wage gaps, due to historical and cultural practices, that cannot be adequately captured in statistical studies. These shape the manner in which labour is remunerated, and often result in women’s work and skills being undervalued (EU 2013). This means, in effect, that women and men receive disparate salaries for the same job. However, a social systems approach would highlight that such factors and practices cannot be generalised since they will vary nationally, locally, according to profession and, in the case of academia, also the particular discipline and department.

Closely related to wage and academic merit is the question of research funding success rates (EU 2009b). This issue also manifests national and disciplinary variations. A positive outcome for grant applications would have obvious benefits as it allows more time to research and research-related activities, which, in turn, leads to increasing merit and consequently probability of promotion and tenure. Recent reports, however, show that the gender-based diverging success rates are not as significant as they used to be (EU 2009b). This can be partly explained by the effects of the EU gender mainstreaming policies which have led to an increase in the proportion of women in the foundation boards and among grant evaluators. Moreover, they resulted in evaluation criteria and procedures becoming more transparent and more clearly based on merit. Finally, in Finland, at least one Professorship is earmarked for Gender and Women’s studies by the Academy of Finland. However, statistics depicting success rates do not tell us anything about the type of research awarded grants. They do not reveal whether the grants are directed towards ways of knowing and doing research that reproduce gendered and other relations of power in society. Additionally, managerialism, austerity measures, departmental research strategies, and restructuring connected to competitive funding policies have had negative consequences for small disciplines. In that regard gender and feminist studies are currently under some pressure in many places in Finland.

Research output, in the form of publications, is a central measure of performance and merit in contemporary academia. The amount and quality of publications are central to a person’s access to promotion and tenure in academia. Women’s lower representation in the upper echelons of academia, it has been suggested, can be partly explained by their proportionately lower amount of publications. Despite the gender gap in research output having decreased over time, it is still prevalent (e.g. Ding et al 2006). Most
quantitative and qualitative analysis in this area has focused on the ‘input’ side: explaining the lower productivity as resulting from of gendered patterns. Explanations have included differences in “personal characteristics, structural positions and marital status”, academic field and education, and academic structures such as the distribution of resources in the form of space, time, money, and equipment (Xie & Shauman 1993 and 2005). Cultural factors such the degree of encouragement and expectation to perform placed on women, combined with gender based discrimination, and ideologies of motherhood, have also been found to have a negative impact on women’s productivity (Long 1990). More recently, it has however been argued that motherhood and family cannot, by itself, explain gender based differences in productivity (Fox 2005; Stack 2004), and that other factors impact upon it. These include academic rank, doctorate qualifications, the degree of specialisation (Leahey 2006), time available for research, international collaboration and engagement in co-authorship networks (Moody 2004; Moody & Light 2006; Bentley 2011). According to Bentley (2011), these factors now have a significantly stronger explanatory power than family, marital status and institutional facilities. Bentley asserts this is a change that has taken place and can be detected by comparing survey data from the early 2000s with that of the early 1990s.

On the ‘output’ side (Frietsch et al 2009) researchers found that, in terms of overall publication productivity, the gender gap has not changed significantly over the past decade. This is also the case in the traditionally better performing nations such as Sweden. The structures of the Swedish labour market, affordable child care facilities and salary levels better accommodate for mothers. Furthermore, there has in Sweden been an increase in numbers of female academics in the male dominated disciplines of science and technology (She Figures 2012). The difference thus lies in the fact that there over this period of time has been a “catching-up of other, lower placed nations” (Frietsch et al 2009).

Bentley’s (2011) findings that networks and international collaborators are of significant importance for gender differences in publication productivity, can be supplemented with findings by Etzkowitz et al (2000). In their study of network relations as a central element of academics’ social capital and professional success, they distinguished between two types of connections. On the one hand, “strong ties” that are often intradepartmental and involve “frequent interaction and usually collaboration (e.g. reading papers, doing conferences together, sharing committee assignments, co-authoring) or sensitive information (e.g. hidden dress codes, department politics, secrets)”. Strong ties are challenging to maintain. On the other, “bridging ties” are usually interdepartmental, are less arduous in nature, and involve less frequent contact. These are significant because they work as:

...bridges over which new ideas flow between two otherwise disconnected research teams that could benefit from one another’s knowledge [...] bridging ties position a researcher to learn of new breakthroughs, to get important
papers before they are published, to learn where competing researchers are investing their resources, or to import techniques from other disciplines into their own. A large network also generates channels for presenting work, educating users about its importance, and disseminating ideas prior to formal review (Etzkowitz et al 2000, 168-169).

Etzkowitz et al’s findings suggest that women had fewer bridging ties than their male counterparts, and that this had a considerable impact on their publication productivity and success.

Associated with bridging ties is the question of mobility: relating to participating in conferences, making short or long term visits to universities abroad, being invited to give guest lectures etc. Mobility is central for furthering national and international visibility and for establishing bridging ties that may later turn into strong international ones (e.g. joint publications). Such connections and collaboration networks have become increasingly important measures of merit or quality for higher educational institutions and academics. Studies indicate that women are less mobile than men. This is a result of women taking personal attachments, marriage and children, more into account than their male counterparts (Etzkowitz et al 2000), but also due to women tending to take heavier teaching loads (She Figures 2009) and care responsibilities at work (e.g. for their students learning). Women therefore tend to be more tied to their home institutions and this allows less time for travelling, research and research related activities (see e.g. Van den Brink & Benschop 2012).

All of these findings suggest that women’s position in terms of family, networks, mobility and publication productivity run the unfortunate risk of leading to a vicious circle. Lack of success on these fronts breeds lack of success in terms of getting promotion or tenure, which in turn reduces their chances of engaging in the activities the increase merits, and so on.

All these studies provide important insights. However, the problem with them is that they reproduce a particular ruling interpretative practice. Of course it is possible to answer questions in a manner that contradicts expectations and for people of same sex category to reply differently to the same question. It is, for example, possible that respondents diverge from ruling stereotypes and expectations placed on members of a particular sex category. Nonetheless, all answers are still interpreted through the gender dualistic lenses. Such studies therefore partake in the reproduction of gendered stereotypes and gender essentialism. Survey questions such as

(1) How important to your personal feelings of well-being is [contacts name]?
(2) To what extent does this contact [contacts name] understand your particular needs as a faculty member?
(3) If the following person [name of contact] asked you to do an activity that had no direct benefit to you (e.g. doing committee work, running an experiment, or proofing a manuscript), would you?
(4) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I sometimes exaggerate the qualities (e.g. experience or expertise) of [contact] to show that I value their relationship (Etzkowitz et al 2000, 161).

These provoke replies on a five point Likert scale. On this basis authors conclude that gender differences in the quality of departmental relations exist because males and females respond differently. However, I would claim that neither the questions nor the responses by themselves allow for such conclusions. The reader has to engage in a great deal of contextual work to understand and interpret the replies as a result of gender or other conventions. This work involves the knowledge and competent enactment of dominant ways of knowing the (“appropriate”) behaviour of a sex categorised man or woman. Such studies then allow us to see the symptoms of gendered (ruling and social) relations, rather than explain the causes of them i.e. the practices that bring them about and reproduce them. The studies also tend to display limited consideration of particular historical, political, economic and social processes shaping the questions posed, the replies offered, as well as the interpretation of the replies.

Before moving on to the next section, I would also like to comment briefly on a more recent (and much celebrated) co-option of the Liberal feminist agenda. This has been named “corporate”, “neo-liberal” or “Lean In” feminism16 by feminist commentators (see e.g. hooks 2013; Young & Becerra 2015; Foster 2013; Campbell, Orr & Eisenstein 2010; Eisenstein 2009). The claim of the advocates of this strand of feminists, which includes members of the political and corporate elite, is that women lack the “perseverance” and “courage” needed to become successful and climb the career ladder. This is used to explain why women are not equal to men. To change this, one member of the executive elite, Sheryl Sandberg (2013), argues that men and women should work together to make it easier for women to “lean in” on the tables where important decisions are made. With this argument Sandberg assumes that men in this modern day and age are eager to “extend the benefits” of capitalism to women. There are many problems with Sandberg’s approach, but I shall mention only a few here: Firstly, it invokes an individualist and homogenous understanding of gender, ignoring the ways in which gender intersects with sexuality, class, race and so on. As a result she forgets that privileged white women “often experience a greater sense of solidarity with men of their same class than with poor white women or women of colour” (see hooks 2013); Secondly, the blame for inequality is ultimately placed on women’s supposedly lack of perseverance rather than systematic inequality caused by the (re)production of subordination and inequality through imperialist, capitalist, patriarchal and heteronormative power relations.

To be sure, Liberal feminism should not be conflated or confused with corporate feminism! However, the development of positions such as these

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16 See LeanIn.org
signal a crisis within Liberal feminist circles as to whether one should see imperialism and capitalism as an ally or an enemy in the struggle for gender equity. More generally, the Liberal feminist approach, and the mode of inquiry that is often connected to it, offer insight for dealing with the symptoms and most obvious discriminatory practices, but it is not a very useful approach for investigating how gendering and discrimination occur in more subtle, taken-for-granted, naturalised and unintentional ways. This is because it does not recognise work organisations and the society and economy they are part of as gendered (e.g. Acker 1990; Alvesson & Billing 1997; Benchop & Meihuizen 2002; Calás & Smircich 2008).

3.2.2 Reviewing other feminist studies of academia and organisations

Unlike the Liberal feminists, the Radical feminists (in more or less essentialising ways) have analysed and theorised work organisations, institutions and society as products of patriarchal power relations. Their solution has been to challenge the taken-for-granted superiority of the masculine, building support networks and alternative organisations, alternative ways of producing knowledge, by and for women based on ideals associated with women or the feminine (e.g. Macoun & Miller 2014). While the idea is appealing, the problem is that it does not explain why women are able to, and often do, enact so called “masculine” values (e.g. Haberstam 1998); just as men are able to, and often do, enact “feminine” ones. Moreover, and related to this, a critical analysis of the subtle (and less subtle) unequal gender relations within patriarchal work organisations such as academia, makes little sense without a simultaneous analysis of the capitalist structures, where work organisations and institutions also operate. Indeed, patriarchy can take many shapes and forms depending on the historical, economic, societal/contextual and material base of its (re)production, and equally the systematic nature of inequality between men and women.

A Radical feminist analysis of patriarchal power relations cannot explain why women continue being subordinate to men despite the nature and particularities of patriarchy varying across contexts and over time (Hartmann 1979, 100). This is where Marxist feminists provide convincing answers. However, the Marxist feminist analysis of capitalism cannot by itself provide convincing explanations as to why “women are subordinate to men inside and outside the family” (Hartmann 1979, 98-99). Capitalism “both accommodates itself to patriarchal social structure and helps to perpetuate it [and] sexist ideology has assumed a peculiar capitalist form in the present”. (Hartmann 1979, 98). Radical feminist analyses and solutions fall short because they fail to recognise how characteristics currently associated with (and considered valuable in) men are equate to the dominant values of capitalism (rationality, competitiveness, independence, individuality) and reproduced through patriarchal homo-social networking practices in all kinds of organisations and institutions. Characteristics currently associated with (and considered

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17 Which is not the same as claiming that there are not certain stereotypes and hegemonic or ruling gendered expectations associated with a given sex category.
valuable in) women (emotionality, irrationality, dependency, collectively provided social services) are considered second order. This ranking of men and women, the masculine and feminine, only makes sense within a capitalist system. Both men and women take an active, embodied part in reproducing the ideology and thereby patriarchal capitalism.

The critiques of Radical- and Marxist feminists delivered by Heidi Hartman (1979), and the subsequent call for a Dual Systems analysis, became central to Materialist or Socialist feminism. Power relations, relations emerging from historical processes, dominant discourses, institutions and epistemological conceptions were scrutinised and their gendered subtext revealed. Socialist feminist analysis and theorising include the work of prominent academics such as Joan Acker (e.g. 1990, 1994 and 2006). Acker (1990) argued that organisations are neither gender neutral nor asexual. She challenged feminists to continue to explore “how gender provides the subtext for arrangements of subordination” especially those that organise work relations. Acker directed attention to the features of organisations that constitute gender and inequality, arguing that organisations provide significant settings for the reproduction of a capitalist and patriarchal system. The very notion of ‘work’ and what Acker termed the “ideal worker” are based on masculine, middle class, heterosexual, white and Anglo-Saxon assumptions vested in a gendered division of labour. Since then numerous studies have documented and illustrated how women and men face different constraints in working life. The constraints women face are rooted in the societal and organisational discourses, symbols, images, ideologies, practices and power distributions. These (re)produce and legitimate gender based inequalities in status and material circumstances (see e.g. Acker 1992; Gherardi 1994; Martin 2003; Calas & Smircich 2006). These writers have shown that some progress has been made to overcome the most obvious structural, institutional and cultural disadvantages and discriminating practices. However, they also assert that gender-based hierarchies in their more subtle forms remain a taken-for-granted, naturalised and often unintentional element of everyday life in organisations (e.g. Acker 1990; Alvesson & Billing 1997; Benschop & Doorewaard 1998; Bain & Cummings 2000; Suiter et al 2001; Benschop & Meihuizen 2002; Krefting 2003; Bailyn 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel 2004; Toutkoushian & Conley 2005; Calás & Smircich 2008; Benschop, Brink & Dooreward 2013).

Within the context of higher education, gendered practices have been documented and analysed from a Socialist feminist perspective in numerous studies. This is also true for Finland (e.g. Kantola 2008; Katila & Merläinen 2000 and 2002; Henttonen & LaPointe 2010). Saija Katila & Susan Merläinen conducted a feminist action research project in their own department at the Helsinki School of Economics in the late 1990s/early 2000s. Their department was characterised by formal equality and solidarity towards working mothers. Despite this they were able to illustrate how women – through homo-sociality and gender stereotypical practices – were systematically disfavoured in terms of academic status and opportunities. Their study aimed at altering these practices through raising awareness of them and, in many ways, had positive
effects. However, as Elina Henttonen & Kirsi LaPointe (2010) pointed out ten years later, the benefits of Katila & Meriläinen’s feminist interventions were put under increasing pressure. This was due to the adaptation of New Public Management performance and accountability measures. A number of authors in and beyond Finland studying gender in academia have utilised Acker’s theory or concept of “the ideal worker”, and translated it into the “ideal academic”. This was performed to draw attention to the way in which New Public Management - and Neoliberal higher educational reforms, austerity and academic capitalism challenge commitments to social justice. Links have been drawn between the ideal neoliberal subject and increasingly narrow masculine elitist notions of what constitutes merit, good academic work and the good academic (e.g. Bleijenbergh et al 2013; Thornton 2013; Fletcher et al 2007; Lund 2012; Lund 2015; Davies & O’Callaghan 2014; Maude 2014; Jenkins 2014).

The redefinition of academic labour within the neoliberal frame is contributing to the restoration of institutional cultures in which masculine domination is celebrated, and certain forms of femininity and non-hegemonic masculinity are suppressed and treated as professional problems and investment risks (Amsler 2014 quoted in Davies & O’Callaghan 2014).

Socialist feminist analyses of bureaucratic forms of control (e.g. Ferguson 1984) show that these do not, in themselves, address gender inequality. In the context of academia, neither does the formalisation of and transparency in recruitment and evaluation criteria and processes (Bird 2011). This is because those in favour of such solutions frequently do not take into account how such bureaucratic and formalised criteria are themselves gendered. They are a product of historical, political, social and epistemic struggles that disfavour/downplay some interests while favouring/highlighting others. Socialist feminists have traditionally worked from a distinction between value producing activities inside and outside the formal labour processes. This has included distinctions between two value-producing activities: those that gain institutional representation and are rewarded (e.g. with an employment contract, promotion and salary increase); and those that are downplayed or invisible in institutional representations, and are not rewarded. The sexual division of labour and the silenced everyday activities of some people form a taken-for-granted subtext and prerequisite for other people to activate or approximate the “ideal worker” (e.g. Acker 2006). According to empirical studies, the activities excluded from the formal labour process are often performed by women (within class and race intersections). The “feminine” reproductive emotional, care and affective work in the home and in the workplace, are not comparable or measurable along lines of “masculine” abstract managerialist and capitalist units of time and task. Therefore, they become excluded from achieving recognition as being of value within the capitalist
Recent developments in capitalism involve ascribing value to so-called “feminine”, emotional, and “non-quantifiable” activities, and have included them in the formal labour process (see e.g. Hochschild 1983; Mäkinen 2012). This makes some academics question whether the Socialist feminist distinctions are still relevant. Indeed, this development would seem to challenge the gendered/sexed division of labour that “constituted women as women” and as subordinate to men within the formal labour processes because now both men and women, in order to be considered valuable employees, have to perform “feminine” and emotional work. The “feminine”, gender, and even to some extent particular notions of feminism, has become an asset or a product/brand on which capitalist accumulation depends (Adkins 2004; Negra 2014; Eisenstein 2009; see also Katila & Eriksson 2013).

While this has been claimed by some to be an opportunity for women to increase their value and remove gender/sex-based barriers to employment and career, this may be too hasty a conclusion to draw (Adkins & Jokinen 2008). It assumes a particular kind of temporal logic tied to the notion of accumulating value. Indeed, merit is about past achievements and the accumulation of knowledge, status and abilities. However, it seems that future potential in terms of the right attitude (see e.g. Brunila 2012), emotional performance and gender reflexivity (e.g. Mäkinen 2012) is increasingly emphasised. This potentiality is something immaterial that cannot be grasped, accounted for and compared in a straightforward manner (Adkins 2008). The question is whether notions of potential can be claimed to be gender/sex neutral, and if so, how? It would therefore appear that further empirical analysis will be needed to demonstrate how recent developments in capitalism may contribute to increasing women’s access to employment and careers, and, conversely, reproduce or intensify gender inequality.

What characterises the Socialist feminist position is that it does not treat gender as a stable variable, but rather a relational ‘doing’ (West & Zimmerman 1987; Acker 2006; Martin 2003; Poggio 2006). Replacing gender or sex with gendering or sexing signifies the ongoing exploration of gender within definite historical, economic, societal, political and institutional processes. This also means, for instance, that there is no necessary equation between the nominal representation of male/female bodies and the level of feminisation/masculinisation of an occupation or an organisation, although there may, of course, be a connection (see e.g. Hearn 2004). Femininity and masculinity is done both by both men and women; gender is not something that is stable or fixed, it is continuously (re)negotiated within the constellations and relations that make up a particular occupation. They are furthermore negotiated within organisational and societal processes that confer particular notions of femininity and masculinity a dominant position. This, however, does not mean that one can predict the effects of gendering
processes on one level on the basis of what happens on another. The levels cannot be neatly separated: indeed, they are interconnected and produce each other in complex ways (Acker 2006).

Often there will be some level of contradiction between gendered societal processes and gendered organisational processes, and the gendered experiences on the level of the workers. In the same manner there will likely be divergences between gendered discourses, as they are constructed and activated on a societal and organisational level and in conversations or activities between individual actors. Similarly, divergences are also observable between university level rhetoric, policies and value statements and the everyday practices and interactions at departmental level (e.g. Bird 2011). Although societal and organisational level discourses may shape the activities of subjects, precisely how or to what extent they shape them cannot be foreseen. Finally, one should not prematurely draw the conclusion that gendered organisations or the enactment of gendered behaviour necessarily implies oppressive forms of gendered social relations on either level (Britton 2000). Clarity on the level of analysis also helps clarify how changes in patterns of gendering come about, and allows for sensitivity towards local and experiential divergence between organisations, units and people.

Disconnections between societal political discourses and actual practices at employee level have, for instance, been discussed by Lisa Adkins (2004; 2008) and Lisa Adkins & Eeva Jokinen (2008). The political rhetoric and agenda favouring the advancement of women and “feminine values” in the labour market and academia does not necessarily lead to gender equality and the end of the sexual division of labour within capitalism (Pateman 1988). Related to this, there are diverging positions as to whether, and to what extent, organisational members are capable of reflecting on gendered practices and their own participation in them. Päivi Korvajärvi (1998) claims, for instance, that while people may be able to do so on a more general level, they tend to find it difficult when it comes to their own immediate surroundings. As a result they end up reproducing a belief that their own environment is gender neutral. Korvajärvi’s point is supported by other studies in the Finnish context. This perceived neutrality is a central feature in the continued reproduction of gender inequality (see e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013; Rantalaiho 1997). However, Lisa Husu (2001) takes a somewhat different stance, claiming that at least within the context of academia, people (and perhaps in particular professors) are able to reflect on concrete practices that lead to gender inequality. However, the ability to reflect on and be aware of gendered practices, although a necessary first step for change, does not necessarily lead to more gender equality (Adkins 2003). The reflective distance to, or strategic use of, masculinity and femininity for furthering managerial, organisational, institutional goals at work may challenge gender stereotypes, but may very well also reinforce them. For example, Adkins explains how it may lead to a “re-traditionalisation” of gender hierarchies since so-called feminine practices may be rewarded when men do them, but be considered ‘natural’ for women (see also Katila & Eriksson 2013).
Socialist transnational feminists of colour (e.g. Bhavnani 2007; Mohanty 2004; Brah 1996) have brought attention to the diverging experiences not only between men and women, but also women and women, and indeed, men and men. The complexity and multifaceted nature of gender-based inequality can only be captured through intersectional analysis of gendering with sexuality, class, race, age (e.g. Crenshaw 1995; McCall 2005; Anderson 2005, 2008; Brah & Phoenix 2004; Phoenix & Pattynama 2006). Unfortunately, it has been noted that many academics, despite intending otherwise, end up providing intercategorical and rather functionalist additive rankings of oppression. As a result they do not open up the dynamic processes of complexly intertwined diverging social relations (e.g. Calas & Smircich 2006; Davis 2008; Bowley 2008; Smith 2009). The concept of intersectionality would suggest that there are multiple contesting femininities and masculinities (see e.g. Hearn 2009; O’Connor, O’Hagan & Brannen 2015). Particular norms, ideals and ways of knowing femininity and masculinity may dominate at a given moment in time, but there are multiple ways of experiencing and responding to the consequences of gendered organisations/societies. The conditions of possibility for enacting particular notions of masculinity and femininity are further shaped by one’s position within the social relations. Although intersectional analysis would seem highly relevant for a greater understanding of the dynamics and complexity of gendering in academia – and perhaps particularly so with higher educational institutions participation in the global market and knowledge economy – few studies have been carried out from this perspective so far (Johansson & Sliwa 2014; Sang, Al-Dajani and Özbilgin 2013; Acker 2008).

Related to the need for more studies of intersectionality is the need for further exploration of the nature of homosociality (e.g. Bird 1996) within changing academia. In 2008 Adelina Broadbridge & Jeffrey Hearn called for more research on the connections between informal gendered practices, apparently gender-neutral societal organisational systems and structures, and homosociality. Homosociality is a concept used in gender and feminist studies to explain the reproduction of homogeneity. That is, the preference and continued dominance of particular types of men and the exclusion (or tokenistic status) of women and feminised men within powerful positions: the continued tendency to favour and recruit white, middle-aged, middle/upper class, males in, for example, top-management positions (Holgersson 2012; Fawcett & Pringle 2000) or professorships (Van den Brink 2009). Homosociality is reproduced through various practices, including that of “hegemonic masculinity” through which the ideal worker and candidate is constructed. Patterns of inclusion/exclusion result from willingness, complicity and/or legitimate access to participate in reproducing such rules. Charlotte Holgersson (2012) suggests that homosociality is done through practices of “(re)defining competence” and “doing hierarchy” (Holgersson 2012, 455). Holgersson shows how competence cannot be separated from gender in recruitment processes. What is valued both in the formal and informal criteria are associated with men and masculinity. Informally,
heterosexual men with well-functioning families, that appear serious, balanced and sober in their behaviour and looks, are considered more competent. This is sometimes combined with ageism, where younger men express explicitly that sexist men are those belonging to an elder generation of unenlightened and reactionary people, hence displaying themselves as modern and progressive. Formally, these criteria favour people with experience from particular types of education, industry and jobs that tend to be dominated by men. Moreover, they favour people who are committed to working long hours, something, given the gendered division of labour in the homes, is more easily accomplished by men. By defining competence according to such criteria women, and indeed most men, can be constructed as deficient, and homosociality maintained (Holgersson 2012, 458-461). Reproducing homosociality thus includes ‘doing hierarchy’, or “maintaining a hierarchy among men” as well as among men and women (Holgersson 2012, 461).

In universities this, for example, manifests itself in invitations to apply for an open position. The decision-makers draw on their networks within and beyond the department, university or other relevant work-organisations (Bird 1996; Bird 2011). Such networks exist in work-related activities but also leisure ones, particularly sports, and they are often male dominated. Senior men within them act as mentors for junior or younger ones, pass on values and norms and help them advance in their career (Bird 2011; Acker 2008). Thus, competence cannot stand alone, but must be supplemented with knowing the right senior people. This does not mean that all the newly recruited are template models of the seniors, but rather that “they are similar enough not to stand out” in terms of culture, values, sexuality, looks etc. (Holgersson 2012, 463).

The notion of homosociality, as defined above, tells us a great deal about the manner in which homogeneity is reproduced in recruitment for top positions. However, homosociality would need to be further explored and unpacked as gendered social relations within changing academia, the global knowledge economy and global capitalism. What shape does the reproduction of “homogeneity” take when an increase in mobility and internationalisation is required? And to what extent can it be maintained when countries and academic organisations participate in competition to attract a foreign qualified and highly educated labour force, and have gender equality on the agenda for the same purposes? How might homogeneity be downplayed at one level and strengthened at other levels, and what does this mean in the context of academia? The homosocial hierarchies and their development need to be unpacked within the wider hetero-patriarchal imperialist capitalist social and ruling relations.

Postmodern, Queer and Poststructuralist feminist analysis, often grouped as third wave feminism, have according to Amy Scott Metcalfe & Sheila Slaughter (2008) provided particularly fruitful tools for approaching and understanding gender in academia. The authors claim these positions allow us to produce a
far more complex and nuanced picture of gender, and intersecting social relations, in academia. This is because these theorise gender as “fluid and relational”, operating with “a desire to explore politics of contradiction, incorporation and negotiation”. These offer a critique of previous feminist traditions tendency to theorise “binary positionalities” and as a result rather “monolithic structures of domination” (see e.g. Calas 2008). (Metcalfe & Slaughter 2008, 81).

The decentering of the subject, rejection of ideology and of studying large-scale institutions and structures of capitalism and patriarchy, is characteristic of Postmodern feminists. As result they are not, according to socialist feminists, able to explain and respond to the systemic and transnational nature of gender, class and race-based exploitation and oppression (e.g. Eisenstein 2009). Nancy Fraser, somewhat controversially (Funk 2013), scrutinised the development and consequences of feminist theorising in her recent book The Fortunes of Feminism: From state managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis (2013) and article ‘Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History’ (2009).

Fraser observes that the Socialist feminist critique of the gendered division of labour in state-organised capitalism has in some ways, and unintentionally, aided a legitimisation of, rather than critique of, “flexible capitalism” (Sennett 2006). Secondly, the postmodernist feminists focus on constructions of gendered identities, and the critique of “cultural sexism” has, to a large extent, taken place at the expense of systematic issues and consequences. This has had the effect of ignoring the material dimensions: that is, the political and economic basis of inequality. This agenda and critique has, therefore, been adopted and adapted by proponents of neoliberalism in an effort to justify privatisation and commodification of public services and goods (Fraser 2013). Thirdly, the Postmodernist feminists’ critique of state paternalism as culturally and discursively reproducing inequality and the victimisation of women is now being used by neoliberals. They have managed to turn a critique conducted with the intention of increasing democratisation into one of “the nanny state”: putting the welfare state in the dock for taking away responsibility and initiative from the individual to be an entrepreneur of her own life. This can also be seen within educational policy and value statements, where entrepreneurship and instrumentalised autonomy now play an increasingly important role within the EU, including Finland (e.g. Brunila 2012). This has grown to be combined with a micro level approach to deal with issues, e.g. in the context of academia (see e.g. Parsons & Priola 2013), at the expense of macro level efforts to combat inequalities. Unintentionally, this has become a means to legitimise marketization, state cuts and boost neoliberal individualism. Accordingly, Socialist feminists have called for a serious re-engagement with materialist analysis of gendered (as well as postcolonial and ecological) social relations. But this re-engagement is of a sort that combines Marxist, Poststructuralist and Foucaultian insights. Institutional Ethnography, I would claim, offers a possible response to this call through the concept of ruling relations.
Postmodernist feminism theorises the subject as constituted in varying, and often contradictory and conflicting, discourses (some of which may have taken on a hegemonic status), as essentially disunified and always in the process-of-becoming. There is, in the local interpretive act and practice, always space for resistance. This, we recall, also leads to a rejection of the notion that there is a subject experience and ontology which we can utilize to formulate common objectives for destabilising the social order and alternative political strategies. Gender having lost its “foundational place” opens up space for observing how subjectivities are not just shaped by gender discourses, but inter-articulated in relation to race and class discourses. These differences can be used in the interest of particular projects that privilege the ‘voice’ of some while downplaying others (e.g. Western Imperialism and the distinction between Western women and the homogenised “Third World Women”. (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon 2002, 86).

The power of any form of categorising, whether conducted in the name of imperialism or feminism, is to downplay diversity of subjectivities, interpretative practices and agency/resistance. The position(s) rejects grand narratives and the analytical focus on large-scale structures such as capitalism and patriarchy; asserting that discourses are never monolithic and that the workings of power (discourses) are always particular and local. As a result the notion of ideology and false consciousness must also be rejected (see e.g. Foucault 1991). Ideology and the notion of false consciousness refer to the internalisation and activation of a particular way of knowing-and-passing-judgment about the world and oneself. These ways of knowing arise externally to that of personal lived experience. It is a way of knowing that arises out of particular social and historical conditions, and systematically works in the favour of particular groups or classes of people (white people and men for instance). Because it is a product of large-scale structures it operates across local places and spaces in a unifying manner. The notion of ideology and false consciousness implies that there is an experiential space before and after ideology that, in principle, can be identified and sought. (see also Owen 2002).

In contrast, the concept of discourse as employed by Postmodernist feminists speaks not of truth and/or falsity, since there is no way of getting behind or beyond discourse to discover truth. Instead, they speak of locally, contextually and individually diverging and always limited perspectives that can be resisted. People are limited by the discourse, but within each discourse there is space for resisting its normalising aspects; ergo, people are not determined by discourse, but shaped by it.

Ideology and discourse are somewhat analogous in that they refer to the way in which concepts, theories, knowledge and information are involved in the coordination of social relations and consciousness in a manner that constitutes rather than represents social reality. Ideology, as a Marxian concept, refers to the reproduction of relations of subordination and exploitation: to the possibility that interests can be derived from understanding certain lived

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18 A broad umbrella term under which I include Post-structuralist, Queer and Foucaultian feminists. I am not unaware of the fact that these positions are also very different in many ways.
experiences, and how the lived experience is hooked into and shaped within (in principle) distinguishable “external” relations. Discourse, as a Foucaultian concept, primarily refers to the constitution of subjectivities and experience. It does not suggest that there is any connection between such discursively constituted subjectivities and interests, the focus is on the “internal” features of social communicative practices (Purvis & Hunt 1993; see also Owen 2002).

Following the postmodern turn, different solutions have been proposed, some explicit, some less so. These range from simply using the terms of discourse and ideology interchangeably without making clear distinctions (e.g. Martin 1990), to suggesting that the concept of ideology loses relevance (e.g. Butler 1993), with others, coming from a materialist or socialist feminist position, arguing that discourse is ideology (e.g. Hennessy 1993). The latter explanation, while embracing many of the insights of, in particular, the Poststructuralist Foucaultian feminists, has criticised their rejection of large scale structures and ideology as problematic. Without these, Hennessy (1993) asserts, we cannot explain the systematic and globally occurring forms of exploitation, global/transnational divisions of labour (e.g. Mohanty 2003), that inhibit the potential for resistance and personal agency. One other critique of the rejection of ‘ideology’ comes from Zizek (1999) who argues that it is precisely when we think that we are beyond ideology that it has its strongest hold on us. Against the argument put forward by Foucault (1991), Zizek also asserts that ideology is not about truth or falsehood, but rather the way in which certain methods of organising society are positioned as inevitable, unquestionable and natural, and accordingly have ideological effects. Zizek’s interpretation of ideology is, I think, a great example of how one can read Marx after postmodernism.

Unlike Hennessy, Smith does not collapse Marxian ideological discourses/ideological codes, and Foucaultian discourses/micro institutional discourses. Instead, she pays tribute to their distinct traditions while suggesting how they might complement each other in discovering the social relations and social organisation of everyday life. Smith’s notion of ruling relations as containing both discourses and ideology therefore encompasses, as well as surpasses, the notion of hegemonic discourse employed by Butler (e.g. hegemonic heterosexuality). Drawing on Smith’s concept of ruling relations in studying the gendered social relations of changing academia is, therefore, a contribution to this debate, conveying how such analysis must consider small, local and translocal levels of materialist and relational organising. Smith, in reading Marx from Marx, provides an alternative description of his materialist epistemology and notion of ideology (Smith 2004b). Smith’s reading does not, unlike Marxists before her, claim that we can make definite claims about consciousness, experience and practice on the basis of knowing material and social position. It is more complex than that. In Smith’s reading ideology is not defined as “the ruling idea of a class” (Smith 2004b, 451) or, if I may add, the ruling idea of a particular gender or racial group, in decision making power (Smith 1990; Smith 2009). Ideology in this sense involves the governing and constituting of the individual’s subjectivity to
the extent that the individual believes herself “the author of the ideology [or
discourse] which constructs her subjectivity”. The subject, against her own
best interest, and through her participation in (re)producing the social and
material relations, becomes the agent of that ideology and thus her own
subordination (Weedon 1987, 27-32). Rather, Smith asserts, ideology has
emerged as a “practice of reasoning” within particular social and historical
processes. Through its materialisation in abstract concepts and categories it
has provided the ground for particular types of experience; ones involving the
separation of actual activities and the language/concepts representing them.
Consequently, there is a separation between actual embodied activities and the
language we use to give voice, apply value, meaning and coherence to our
experiences and participation in social relations. The actual activities that
make up social relations become expressed in categories, and through these
come the forms of thought in which the particular social relations come to
consciousness (e.g. the mind/body dualism as originating in Rene Descartes’
philosophy). This becomes visible when we see how its categories and concepts
become grounded in social relations and come to organise the activities there.

It is a sequence of practice through which concepts become treated as if they
were determining (rather than originating) in real activities...though ideology
may begin in the real world, it proceeds by constructing a concept or theory that
supplants the original and treats the original actualities as expressions or effects
of the concept or theory... ideological forms of thought are manifestations of
actual relations worked up in the realm of speculation in such a way that the
actual ground of the concepts is occluded. The relations determine the
categories, not the thinker. The determination of consciousness by life lies in the
activity of subjects, knowers, working in the already social form of language
with categories, which express actual relations. There is an actual organization
of social relations which generates or determines what appears to people – the
jurist for whom ideas appear to rule; the philosopher for whom reality is an
object of contemplation – these are experiences arising in the definite social
relations that are given theoretical explanation. The ideological forms of
thought express these relations but reconstruct them speculatively. The
relations themselves are concealed behind the ideological screen (Smith 2004b,
453-455)

Smith’s notion of ideology or ideological discourses is Marxian (2004b), but
rather than imply a “mechanical transfer of class status to class consciousness”,
it refers, in my reading, to a “directionality of ideology” (Purvis & Hunt 1993)

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19 That is, particular social relations as they took shape in particular historical processes, in a particular
place and time.

20 Ruling relations cannot be reduced to hegemonic ways of knowing in the Gramscian sense.
Nonetheless, Gramsci’s description of how particular ways of knowing through complex processes
achieve position as if they were unproblematic, neutral and objective representations, arising beyond time
and space, has helped me make sense of Smith’s description of ideology and the ruling relations.
that allows us to analyse the effects of certain discourses as ideological.

Smith, drawing on Foucault, conceives discourses as being text-mediated social relations that coordinate multiple particular and institutionally varied local sites, as people read, write or speak them. These discourses organise the social; but they are themselves socially organised. Micro-level specialised discourses are themselves embedded in complex historically specific larger scale professional, political and economic discourses. These also change over time as a result of shifts in ruling practices and institutional ordering. Ethnography of the text will show that texts differ; some allow for more interpretation, negotiation and agency to resist than others at particular points in time. In contrast to discourses, which we activate and produce ourselves, Smith suggests that ideologies are something we are made subject to (Smith 2004f). What Smith terms ‘ideological codes’ operate in more universalising or standardising ways than discourses. As such, the effect of the ideological can be found in its ability to organise eligibility for participation in institutional and other associated discourses in a given local setting where people work to make the institutional actionable. While people can draw on discourses and discursive interpretive practices in diverging ways, thereby making it possible to embrace or resist ideological codes, people will usually be held accountable to them because there are material consequences for transgression.

Smith does not use terms such as “partiality” or “multiple” subjectivities, as is the case with some Postmodern feminists (e.g. Haraway 1991). Smith’s notion of standpoint and experience does, however, start from local particularities. It is crafted to challenge objectifying discourses, ideologies and knowledge “in ways that do not return it to the universalized subject or empiricist truth claims on the basis of any unified experience as an authority to speak” (Homanen 2013, 43). Intersectionality is built into Institutional Ethnography (e.g. Lorde 1984; Smith 2005; see also hooks 2000). The Institutional Ethnographic approach to engaging with the complex intersection of social relations cannot, however, be placed under frameworks of “doing difference” (e.g. West & Fenstermacher 1995) or doing subjectivity (Butler 1993). Butler argued that every “doing” of gender, race and sexuality, includes the possibility for resisting and “undoing” it (Butler 2004). Contrary to this position Smith argues that referring to the social relations, and the discourses at play within them, as being merely markers of ‘difference’ that can be resisted and “undone” largely overlooks the fundamentally different capacities these relations hold. Some social relations, such as gender and sexuality, have, within certain places and time, proven to be more open for negotiation, resistance and change than others. This does not, however, necessarily imply “undoing”, but rather another mode of “doing”. Other social relations, such as race, are more deeply steeped in prejudices and ideologies that reinforce subordination through the perpetuation of stereotypes regardless of subjects’ resistance and otherwise privileged position within the social relations. (Smith 2009).

Institutional Ethnography contributes to the debate by combining the Socialist feminist concern with relations of power and inequality, with the
Postmodern feminist concern with representation, generalisations and objectification. Smith's approach offers a systematic approach to an exploration of the material and relational organisation of inequality. It places the text (the concepts, ideological codes, discourse and language it carries) and its power to shape at the centre of ethnographic investigation. Indeed, the text is central for investigating the ongoing active coordination of embodied activities that (re)produce social relations. The text mediates ruling relations that, when taken up and activated, sometimes produce generalising and sometimes differentiating effects within and across local settings. Effects that are essential, yet sometimes detrimental to, accomplishing ruling purposes, institutional intentions or interest.

3.3 Summary

My review of feminist literature from the perspective of Institutional Ethnography was multi-layered. My ambition has been to write myself in to feminist academic contributions to studies of gender within academia and organisations. From the perspective of Institutional Ethnography, I have illuminated three connected layers of contribution. I have clarified and critiqued objectifying tendencies in Liberal feminist contributions to understanding gender in academia, and highlighted contributions made regarding gender in academia and organisations from other feminist perspectives. Equally, I have identified where and how gendered social relations could be further unpacked by taking into account the changing nature of work, capitalism and academia. Finally, I have demonstrated how Institutional Ethnography with the concept of ruling relations provides me with resources for active participation in the on-going debate between Socialist and Postmodern feminists. This is particularly relevant regarding questions of micro-macro institutions and processes, ideology and discourse, subjectivity, experience and difference.
4. Methods and process of carrying out an Institutional Ethnography

The idea for a research project empirically focusing on Aalto University from a gender perspective didn't originate as an abstract hypothesis. It started from my early discussions with one of my future supervisors, Janne Tienari, in relation to writing up a research plan and application for the doctoral programme. I was to be connected to an interdisciplinary research group, consisting of academics studying the new university from diverging theoretical and methodological lenses, some of which were critical. This was a project that was not only to result in academic journal articles, but also in a report offering policy and practice recommendations to the University’s management team. The project continued for approximately one year into my doctoral studies. Although the project’s bursary supported me in conducting a visit to KTH in Stockholm and a PhD course in Sweden, it was not, within that time frame, possible for me to contribute to the report. There is no doubt, however, that being able to refer to the project was an advantage that gave me opportunities and access to interview people at the upper echelons of academia.

My choice of methodology, Institutional Ethnography, was decided upon relatively early. I knew from the earliest stages of writing up my research plan that I wanted to carry out an ethnographic study. While writing my doctoral application research plan; during the first weeks of my doctoral studies; and alongside early engagement with organisational documents, I therefore explored different ethnographic approaches. In the course of this I discovered two feminist organisation studies review articles by Marta Calas and Linda Smircich (2006 and 2008). In their reviews they observed that Institutional Ethnography remained underutilised in feminist organisation studies and they called for more studies drawing on this method of inquiry. From their review I learned that Institutional Ethnography was at its core an explicit political and feminist standpoint epistemology. Given my earliest experiences of coming to, encountering and speaking to academics at Aalto University, this epistemological approach appealed to me. Their call therefore prompted me to read Dorothy Smith’s *The Everyday World As Problematic* (1987), which, despite being frustratingly scarce on references and characterised by verbose and dense sentences, absolutely rocked my world. Everything that I had learned regarding how to carry out research and theorise was to be unlearned and rethought. I was intrigued. Concurrent with this my supervisor, Tienari, suggested that I might consider Institutional Ethnography as my method of
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inquiry. I made a decision and adhered to it. About a year into my process I contacted Marja Vehviläinen, from Gender Studies at Tampere University, who was to become my second supervisor and a hugely important guide, discussion partner throughout my research process.

In this chapter I wish to explicate my research process: specifically, how I produced data for this dissertation and what makes Institutional Ethnography distinct from other modes of data production; and what it does, and does not, allow me to do.

The answering of the question, how the ruling ways of knowing gender and quality organise academic workers in changing academia, has itself been guided by the two interconnected empirical analytical research interests and questions. Firstly, how are gendered social relations of academic work organised and enacted among academics in changing academia? Secondly, how are the social relations coordinated and shaped by texts in and around the practices that define and evaluate the quality and potential of academic work? These represent three connected aspects of exploring the “ideal academic” as gendered social relations within changing academia and the prevailing institutional intentions of becoming “world-class”. I investigate the relations of ruling from a particular standpoint within the social relations of changing academia, and take my point of departure in the everyday problematics and disjunctures experienced by junior female academics. My study aims to contribute to unpacking of the social relations of gender within changing academia. By this, I mean, what happens to gendered social relations of academic work when particular ways-of-knowing, ideologies and discourses of quality and potential, connected to the changing nature of global capitalism, academia and work, gain an unprecedented foothold in organising everyday activities within academia. I want to convey how that social organising happens by explicating the dynamic relations the local and translocal; between the local micro-dynamics of everyday practices and the trans-local meso and macro-dynamics, including sociocultural, sociopolitical, socioeconomic and historical material processes. Indeed, any serious acceptance of the the ontological premise of Institutional Ethnography seriously means that a distinction between micro, meso and macro levels must be considered a misleading abstraction and categorisation. Rather, in producing and reproducing each other, they are intertwined in complex ways. Institutional Ethnography defines the social as a relational happening within and across local sites, with an analytical distinction made between the local and translocal relational modes of coordination: The local signifying that all embodied practices (producing and reproducing social and ruling relations) necessarily happen in a specific place and time, and the translocal signifying that the local activities hook us into sequences of actions that connect us to people and practices elsewhere and elsewhen. These modes help the researcher shed light upon the intertwined nature of the social.

In seeking to understand the social organisation of making actionable the ideal academia and ‘becoming world-class’ the focus of my data production was twofold. In one respect it involved understanding actual everyday
activities and experiences of junior female academics and, yet also how these are socially coordinated within a complex of social and ruling relations. The data objectives were shaped in an iterative process that alternated between data production, analysis, and literature. They would come to involve discovering: (1) the nature of work and (self) evaluation in changing academia (2) the values and priorities of diverging work in changing academia (3) how the values and priorities were shaped (4) whether, how, and the extent to which social relations of gender play a role (5) which interests the work serves and (6) the effects and consequences for those whose standpoint I have taken.

In obtaining data I engaged in reflexive participant observation/observant participation, in-depth interviews and text/artefact collection. My fieldwork and data production spanned a period of three and a half years, interspaced by research visits abroad. I began data-production in early autumn 2010 and ended with the announcement of a gender and diversity policy agenda at the school of economics in spring 2014. By this time, I had produced one hundred pages of font size ten field note vignettes; conducted interviews with 35 differently positioned people; and gathered hundreds of pages of organisational/institutional texts and artefacts.

Given the length of this chapter, I will briefly provide my reader with a map for its navigation. In the first section I discuss how Institutional Ethnography differs from other ethnographic methods and cultural analysis. I highlight what I see as the four central steps to conducting Institutional Ethnographic inquiry and my ethical approach. Following this, I outline my data production and my reflections on difficulties and/or dilemmas arising from these. In considering this, I describe what it means to carry out observations in one’s home institution, and, in doing so, distinguish between observant participation and participant observation. Similarly, I reflect on my multiple subject positions (researcher, colleague, friend, protégé, subordinate) in the field and the possible barriers these present to reducing objectification. I consider the question of language barriers: how and to what extent being insider/outsider, the development of friendships, my own and my participants’ emotions, have affected my data production. In addition, I describe in greater detail the actual data I have produced and how I produced it: the where, what, whom and how of observations; the where, what, whom and how of interviews; and finally, how I have identified the types of texts that help me connect local experience to translocal coordination. I end the chapter by documenting the methods I have used for analysing the data.

4.1 Institutional Ethnography in the light of other ethnographies

Ethnography is defined as a collection of qualitative methods utilised in order to produce data concerning and describe, everyday life in definite local settings. Classic ethnography, as performed by anthropologists in the early 20th century, usually involved observation and interviews with the purpose of understanding distant and exotic cultures. These methods were then developed by ethnologists, cultural- and social scientists in order to study their
own societies from the perspectives of diverging social groups. In the present day a myriad of ethnographies can be identified, ranging from autoethnography, shadowing, interviewing on the move, to the study of how things/objects define and shape activities. Academics may very well engage in the field as a group, and photos, art, film, fiction, as well as materials from archives, media and internet are increasingly drawn upon in attempting to make sense of human activities. Field-work has changed and is now used in a wide range of disciplines, such as ethnology, anthropology, sociology and organisation studies (Ehn & Löfgren 2012).

Ethnography is often conflated with cultural analysis. The concept or notion of culture and what is meant by cultural learning processes will, depending on one’s ontological and epistemological point of departure, differ. Broadly speaking, cultural analysis is focused on making sense of social life, learning about the social and cultural rules, norms and practices and how they work in constituting and constructing its members, while simultaneously making sense of the individual members as actively (re)producing, using, and sometimes resisting such rules, norms and practices through their doings and sayings. The focus can be on people’s cognitive sense making activities; language, ways of structuring thoughts, symbols and codes. For such purposes in-depth ethnographic interviews may, in principle, be able to generate the data needed. However, if the focus of the study is on the unconscious embodied and taken-for-granted activities that people engage in daily, then, given that people may not be able to put words to these, the interviews may not be sufficient. (Ehn & Löfgren 2012). In both cases, however, the researcher learns about everyday life, the cultural and social routines and patterns, albeit with divergent focuses.

In Institutional Ethnography the term “culture” is generally not used. The term “culture” objectifies and obscures the struggles, negotiations and material basis that lay behind it. Instead, the institutional ethnographer seeks to explore the very notion of “a shared culture”, questioning whose interests this serves, and who can legitimately claim to be, and are recognised as, members or representatives of that culture? (see e.g. Lund & Tienari 2015). Institutional Ethnography can performed in many ways and with different focuses, and, according to Smith, may very well be solely interview based. Central in this is that the choice of method can be justified on the basis of the research question(s). Furthermore, interviews can, Smith argues, be carried out in a manner that exposes the taken-for-granted and the practices of everyday life, as I will return to in greater depth later (Smith 2006). In rather general terms ethnographic studies usually consist of at least two stages. First, the researcher “goes native”, that is, learns to see the world through the eyes of the members of a particular local culture. This demands relatively open research questions. Secondly, the researcher will attempt to distance his or herself in order to identify what constitutes the interesting aspects of the culture in question. It will often be an iterative process of moving back and forth between “going native”, distancing, engaging with other materials and literature. (Ehn & Löfgren 2012). In Institutional Ethnography the focus is not culture(s) or cultural learning processes as such - the focus and terminology
differs. Firstly, the focus is on comprehensively exploring the everyday practices and work in a particular local setting. In either case work is defined in an open and empirically empty manner. Work consists of everything people do that takes time and effort, sometimes joy, anxiety and worrying, when they (re)produce the institutional order. Depending on one’s research objectives and interests, “going native” is not necessarily the best strategy since it may ‘blind’ the researcher to the institutional order, and thereby hinder generating fruitful data. Secondly, distancing oneself from the practices and work, in order to engage with it analytically, is involved in two methodological moves that preferably should be activated while engaging in, as well as after, data production. The first involves avoiding “institutional capture”, defined as treating institutional concepts and language as if they were descriptive rather than constitutive. The other concerns enabling the identification of a disjuncture and research problematic, on the basis of which a research question(s) and interests are formulated, and perhaps reformulated (Smith 2005).

While traditional ethnographies and organisational ethnography focus on a definite or immediate local setting, institutional ethnography moves beyond the local in order to reveal how it is hooked into and coordinated in translocal social relations. These translocal relations themselves grew out of particular local social relations. Nonetheless some have, over time, assumed an objectified, standardised, generalised position, divorced from the particular and local. However, it is only through work performed in various localities that these relations are (re)produced, changed and kept alive. The text theorised as the material object hooking the local into the translocal social relations makes the translocal observable in the local. What is usually ascribed to abstract and objectifying theories about “the system,” “the structure,” “the patriarchy,” “the political,” “the economic,” “the national,” or “the cultural”, can be observed in concrete everyday practices.

Despite the fact that there are commonalities, Institutional Ethnography is not identical to other ethnographies such as Netnography or Multi-sited Ethnography. The latter is ideal for exploring how, for example, purchasing a chocolate bar connects you to people, animals, texts and things elsewhere: such as farmers, field workers, commodity producers, factory workers, food bloggers and so on. Multi-sited ethnography is a way of mapping out how that purchase became possible in the first place, through exploring various local sites and mapping them out as “a constellation of people, plants, bugs, diseases, recipes, politics, trade agreements, and histories, whose multiple, complex entanglements and disjunctures animate this ‘thing’ and its travels”. (Cook & Harrison 2007, 4). Ditto, Institutional Ethnography also differs from Netnography, which has been developed in the field of marketing and consumer research to understand online communities and cultures such as gaming and second life virtual realities, fan sites, advice and support groups for people with various illnesses, online language learning, and so on. Such sites connect us with people from all over the world, play an increasingly
significant part of social experience today and shape local activities and ways-of-knowing (see e.g. Kozinets 2010).

Just as in Institutional Ethnography, these ethnographies challenge the local-global dualisms and provide a basis for the study of how people, material artefacts, metaphors, plots/stories/allegories, biographical narrative structures, and conflicts travel and produce cultural formations across multiple sites (Marcus 1995). Nonetheless, they do not necessarily share the epistemological orientation of Institutional Ethnography, particularly in relation to the question of standpoint and experience. The object of study also differs slightly. Multi-sited and online ethnography usually focus on cultural formations, whereas Institutional Ethnography focuses more on how multiple work-knowledge’s are shaped within institutional, objectifying ways of knowing and social relations. Institutional Ethnography goes beyond multi-sited ethnography because it studies the translocal “through” particular local sites (see also Wright and Reinhold 2011). There is no single way of doing Institutional Ethnography (e.g. Smith 2006), but it provides a frame of reference for assuring that all levels of organising are taken into account. For explaining how people coordinate activities within translocal sequences of action. Smith’s theorisation of material, replicable, and active texts is crucial here.

I see Institutional Ethnography as consisting of four steps:

1. Identify a standpoint from where you wish to investigate institutional processes (identifying the disjuncture and formulating the problematic). (I identified a standpoint through participant observation/observant participation, my own experiences and interviews at the early stages of my doctoral research.)

2. Based on indications given by research participants identify some of the immediate institutional processes shaping that experience. (These I identified through observant participation in local events, conversations and interviews with junior female academics and identification of documents and texts they activated or referred to.)

3. Move beyond the immediately and locally occurring processes to explore how these are related to processes that take place elsewhere/elsewhen. (This I did by, for instance, making a cartography of texts and extended social relations, identifying discourse and ideological codes. In doing this I conducted interviews with male junior academics, professors, management and administrative personnel. I also used participant observation/observant participation and text gathering.)

4. Describe how the translocal processes operate as grounds of the local experience/interpretive practices – return to the standpoint.

Being an iterative process there was a significant amount of alternating between these steps and methods of data production. In the following section I will explain my research process by engaging reflexively with it and demonstrating how each stage of the process helped me “fill in” the four stages
outlined above. The purpose of reflexivity is twofold. Firstly, it allows me to move beyond the claim that Institutional Ethnography “preserves” the presence of the subject or research participant (Smith 2005). I want to detail the work I must engage in, as a researcher, to produce this standpoint and subject presence, and ensure that I constantly return to it (see e.g. Walby 2006). Related to this more methodological dimension are the ethical concerns and considerations inbuilt in reflexivity, specifically, how does ethnographic research carried out at one’s own work place – where people are simultaneously colleagues, superiors, protégées, friends and research participants – influence what kind of data I obtain, from whom I obtain it, how I obtain it and how I organise and interpret it.

Beyond foundational ethics

The power relations characterising researcher-participant engagement in the field are of a particular kind when studying one’s own workplace. I am a PhD student at a University full of competent researchers positioned at different levels of the “academic hierarchy”. I am not necessarily, at all times or stages of the research process, situated as someone more powerful. I am “studying up” as well as ‘down’ ‘sideways’ and ‘through’” (Moeran 2009, 145). I am evaluating and being evaluated.

While my familiarity with the setting might result in “deeper and more profound knowledge of the setting […] more well-grounded in experiences and observations that are common […]” and “give a better feeling for what goes on than what ‘conventional’ ethnography allows” (Alvesson 2009, 163), this is also the basis for certain ethical dilemmas. What information and insights can I use without compromising the trust of my superiors, colleagues and friends? How do I maintain their anonymity and confidence without compromising my own research project and the standpoint I have taken? How do I deal with the paradox that I, in order to voice a critique of ruling discourses, ideologies and practices in academia, at times, come to reproduce such discourses and practices myself? I will incorporate such reflections in the account of my research process, rather than spell out all these in a separate section.

Foundationalist ethics, often applied in mainstream research practice, represent forms of objectification. It is based on prescriptive, abstract, disembodied, predefined guidelines and is usually restricted to concerns with how to achieve anonymity, informed consent and avoid harming the informant. An ethical stance in order to be consistent with Institutional Ethnography, I think, must rather and necessarily be situated and rest upon ongoing reflexivity, criticality and standpoint. Taking this position does not mean that anything goes, but rather demands a situated and negotiated approach throughout the course of fieldwork. This is a choice I consider to be in accordance with Institutional Ethnography’s ambition of anti-objectification.
4.2 Participant Observation or Observant participation? Entering the field and entering Doctoral Studies

I came to Finland, Helsinki and Aalto University in August 2010. At that time I had a Finnish partner, and had visited Finland with him on a number of occasions. However I had little-to-no knowledge of the language and, despite having learned about historical and social specificities, my knowledge of Finnish culture and codes of communication was limited.

On top of being a stranger to the Finnish language and culture, I was also a stranger to the institutional and disciplinary setting I was entering into. Most of the people I encountered at the beginning of my doctoral studies were from one of the three old higher educational institutions now comprising the new university. In that respect the recently merged Aalto was in many ways an unfamiliar institution to all the people working there. However, these people carried with them – more or less consciously – something in common: ways of knowing and doing that they had embodied and made their own. This involved taken for granted rituals, rules, codes of conduct and communication, and notions of academic quality. The new ways of Aalto had to be developed, and were simultaneously a source of excitement and hope, yet also anxiety and fear. Many voiced that they wished for and believed that there was a need for some changes, but also expressed a sense of powerlessness in the face of managerial decisions, changing strategies, agendas and measures of quality which had not been defined by themselves, and were considered community dismantling.

The particular discipline I entered into, organisation studies, was also strange to me. My own background was in political science, with an interest in political philosophy and gender studies. The department I was entering into, much in opposition to the (not always unfounded) prejudices and stereotypes flourishing about schools of economics, had a history of engaging in critical studies of capitalism, management, organisations and work. The Marxist sociology of work had a strong standing in the department. Moreover, there was a sizable groups of people interested in gender and diversity studies, cultural studies, higher educational studies, philosophy of social sciences, global ethics, the history of economic thought, creative sustainability, degrowth and deep ecology. People, across the spectrum, were passionate about experimenting with methods and philosophies of teaching. Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s a feminist action research project had put gender equality on the departmental agenda. My fellow PhD colleagues and I were watching political documentaries, reading political poetry, and passionately discussing ecological, feminist, anti-capitalist, socialist revolutionary politics at informal meetings. The study of work, organisations and management from these critical perspectives, within schools of economics and beyond, appeared to me extremely timely and important. We are living in a time where global capitalism grows more predatory, generates increasing social polarisation and inequality, accelerating the exhaustion of natural resources (the very reduction of nature to “resources” being a product of capitalist logic), a time where competitive economic ideologies, logic and discourses are expanding to enclose organisations, institutions, policy areas and people that earlier worked
under different logics and ways-of-knowing. Therefore, I had numerous reasons to be hopeful about my stay there. Nonetheless, throughout my fieldwork I often sensed that many people expected to be met with prejudice or judgmental attitudes from people, such as myself, with other disciplinary backgrounds.

Nonetheless, I knew, as mentioned, that my primary interest was in gender. However, rather than take a categorical approach or theoretically assume the relevance of gender, I entered into the field to discover it. That is, discover how it unfolds, its relevance and interconnectedness with other social relations of academic work. It was my participation in an information event for new doctoral students that triggered my interest in what the experiences of junior female academics could teach me about changing academia. The event was designed with the purpose of informing new doctoral students about academic life as well as bureaucratic requirements and procedures. As a new doctoral student I had planned on taking notes for that event, and had brought pen and paper with me. A PowerPoint presentation given by a senior person of influence within the university would highlight how a serious doctoral student ought to make priorities and schedule his everyday life. The presentation allowed me an initial glimpse into the naturalised social organisation of academia.

After congratulating the Doctoral Students with their excellent choice of University and reminding us of our responsibility in terms of reaching the vision of becoming a world class university by 2020, X gave us some advice on how to plan our doctoral studies ...Following a basic idea for a schedule – which included working seven days a week, one hours free time per day in which one could combine eating dinner and seeing one’s “girlfriend”, and eight hours of sleep per night – X moved on to emphasise the importance of “going international”, doing research abroad and creating connections outside Finland. X also made a point of saying that we should not expect being able to take on a really good [read: present] parenting role and, at the same time, seriously pursue an academic career. X emphasised that “you must invest” in your doctoral education and invest in developing your research methods and theories and this is not possible if you want to be a present parent... no questions were asked...

Although all this was proposed in a somewhat jocular tone, a very serious message was implied. It suggested that you should either seek to comply with this scenario, or forgo the dream of becoming a successful academic within a “world-class” university. Despite this, and despite the fact that many of the doctoral students had children, partners, or both, and that most people, I assume, have interests beyond work, no one, as far as I could discern, laughed, frowned or questioned his proposal. It was clear to me that a social organisation of academia favouring the masculine, hetero-normative, young
and middle-class, was assumed in the speech. If a person does not, or cannot, participate fully in the social relations of academic work, the production of its status as an aspiring “world-class university” is compromised. During the coffee break that followed the speech I learned, from conversation with young female PhD students, that they did not consider it an ideal they had any wish to or chance of living up to. They, however, they had not reacted to the speech. Inequality in academia is (re)produced in those relations, in the distinctive organisation of those relations; not externally to them. It became clear to me that I needed to find out how those relations worked.

By early October 2010 my department faculty had been introduced to my research plan at a “Welcome to the new PhD students” Friday research seminar. Here people could ask questions and provide suggestions for how to proceed with the research. I observed the following in my field notes from the seminar:

Three other female doctoral students and myself are giving a presentation at the Friday research seminar: presenting ourselves, what we plan on doing research on, what we are currently working on and plan on doing in the near future. In my presentation I explain about my wish to carry out an ethnographic study of Aalto University from a gender perspective. The participants are sitting in a horseshoe formation. With the exception of my supervisor and one other man, the male listeners are conveying a mixture of disinterest, scepticism, reluctance, with arms crossed at their chest, appearing dissatisfied with the content of the presentations. I expect harsh feedback, but none of them say anything. Not to me at least. As a new doctoral student their body language makes me feel quite insecure. I suppose I at this stage have a need and wish for a supportive attitude from the senior staff. Luckily, the women in the crowd appear more interested and are actively asking questions, engaging in dialogue and providing feedback. I cannot help but think whether it would have been different had I been male rather than female. The question of course is whether the difference would have been in young male PhD students simply not caring or detecting such body language as problematic; or whether such body language might not have occurred in the first place. I have no way of knowing and I have no way of knowing whether it would have made a difference. After the seminar I mention my experience to my supervisor. He tells me that he also noticed this. Oh, the relief. For a second there I feared I might have been overly sensitive; that my own feelings are nothing but over-reactions as a result of my own insecurity. Living up to the gendered stereotypes it seems; needing male confirmation that my emotional response is reasonable.

Not too long after the welcome seminar our department hosted a national tutorial. Anyone who had signed up for it had to submit a paper to a coordinator. The coordinator would place each doctoral student in a discussion group – consisting of two professors and three doctoral students – and decide on a professor who would be chiefly responsible for preparing
feedback for each paper. In my paper I introduced my method of inquiry – Institutional Ethnography – and detailed my epistemological, ontological and theoretical reflections. Before the tutorial, the male professor responsible for offering me feedback had passed by my desk to assure me that I should not be concerned or nervous about the session. At the event I received some really encouraging, thorough and useful feedback from him. The other professor in the discussion group – a female professor – called my position “arrogant”. She wondered how I could assume to be able to tell people anything they did not already know about how their experience of changing academia had been shaped the way it had. Her reaction was, to some extent, a result of her not subscribing to a critical and/or feminist research tradition. And to some extent about me not being sufficiently clear about what I meant by standpoint. Nonetheless, I was quite surprised by her negative reaction. Therefore it was with somewhat mixed feelings that I decided to commence research work within my own department.

In my own department, where my everyday time was spent, I was becoming acquainted with people, their concerns about the new university, and they, in turn were finding out about my work. I would go knock on people’s office doors and ask whether they would mind having a conversation with me. If they were interested, I would send them an email with information about my particular research project, how I planned on using the interview data, and assure them of their anonymity. If they requested more details I would provide them.

At this early stage of my doctoral research it was not quite as easy to arrange interviews in the way I had hoped. 2010 was the year of the merger, of huge transformations in the academic career system and, for many, it was a time of tension and insecurity. Quite a few people expressed explicit concern with participating in my study. One, in an email, expressed: “If you decide to use this in your analysis I would appreciate if you would let me read what you have written and make it anonymous in a way that I don’t get into trouble with the Aalto management.” Others explained that they were too busy trying to be parents and live up to the increasing demands for publishing, and could not spare any time for an interview. However, both those who accepted an interview and those who did not would, explicitly or implicitly, make clear how it was ‘important that somebody had the guts to carry through this study’ and ‘that it was probably good that it was an outsider who took the lead, since no one of consequence would want to listen to an insider’.

My so-called “lucky break”, what caused the shift in people’s perception of me and therefore my opportunities as a fieldworker to gain the trust of my participants and access to information (Moeran 2009, 146), is not entirely clear to me. I cannot recall a particular event or moment when it occurred. It arrived subtly and over time (during the first 6 months) through a combination of factors. Firstly, my “reputation” as a good and hardworking PhD student was consolidated by professors (including my supervisor), whose doctoral courses I had taken, with whom I had co-authored conference papers or in other ways cooperated. Any appraisal made of my performance from
someone would make its way to me via other department members. Secondly, people seemed to have a growing need to voice their experiences and frustrations, and perhaps felt that my research was a unique channel to do so. Indeed, several people expressed that attempts at voicing frustrations and suggestions for improvement through formal channels – such as department information meetings, university committees, to an academic manager or through evaluations – did not lead to anything. Thirdly, and I think most importantly, I grew more familiar with decoded practices of communication and conduct in the departmental community, slowly learning to understand what was, and was not, acceptable, and how to balance the expectations, agenda and needs of my potential participants and myself. This was something I was conscious of but not uncomfortable with. I only later recognised my early attempts to decode and comply with the practices and codes of conduct (i.e. what to say and do, and not to say and do) as a strategy - a strategy not only to gain access, but also to establish a much needed sense of trust, belonging and friendship bonding21

4.3 Multiple roles and subject positions in the field

4.3.1 The question of language barriers

I was painfully aware that I, as a non-Finn and someone from a different disciplinary background, was an outsider (Wolf 1996). This was something that I, in the early stages of my doctoral studies, reflected on as a possible advantage for carrying out an ethnographic study in this setting. The ambition of avoiding institutional capture meant that my being unfamiliar with the language of the institution and discipline could be advantageous. I would not become accustomed to it as quickly as insiders and hence treat such language as taken-for-granted representations. On the other hand I had an obvious disadvantage. While no “culture” can be reduced to its language, there was no doubt that not knowing the Finnish language, and having to engage with my participants in English22 would prevent me from approaching the everyday experiences, activities and practices in “real time”. Furthermore, it would be a problem in terms of depicting untranslatable cultural meanings and expressions. In other words, the language barrier would be a barrier to adequately reproducing people’s standpoint.

I learned to deal with the language question in four ways: Firstly, I would learn enough Finnish to be sensitive to certain things that in the act of translation (a native Finnish speaker, conversing with me in English) could not be treated as if the participant had been a native English speaker. A good example is that the Finnish language downplays gender difference by invoking the gender-neutral hän instead of her or him. When speaking English many Finns therefore confuse ‘her’ and ‘him’. Therefore, in the interview situation I

21 Remember that I had no social network in Finland, apart from my boyfriend and his parents at the time.
22 And not always on fully equal terms since I have grown up as a bilingual, while most of my participants, although speaking it more or less fluently, had English as second or third language.
would have to be careful to ask for clarification about gender. But it also meant that I, in the analysis of a conversation, could not assume the consequent use of ‘him’ (e.g. when speaking of professors) to be a sign of the participant reproducing a taken-for-granted male hegemony in academia. Furthermore, in cases where I sensed that my participant had difficulties finding appropriate or accurate English words, in interviews as well as situations of observation, I asked for the Finnish word as well. In other cases it would be imported words with no Finnish equivalent or translations, such as the tenure track system.

Secondly, Aalto University had, as part of its internationalisation strategy, adapted a language policy that demanded all organisational and institutional documents be in Finnish, Swedish (the two official languages of Finland) and English. In that way I had access to understanding documents and guidelines in at least two languages (Swedish and English). Moreover, it did, within my own department, after a couple of years – as part of the internationalisation strategy and on the basis of the Dean’s call for “inclusion” – become practice, albeit a much debated and controversial one, to send out invitations to seminars and other official departmental events in English and conduct most official events in English, all of which helped me in terms of collecting documents and texts.

During the first year of my studies in the department people would often continue conversing or speaking in Finnish with each other when I was present. On the basis of a principle of not wanting special treatment I would never openly refer to this, object, or ask them to speak in English. Despite the fact that the exclusion and personal frustration the language barrier obviously caused, I had, after all, chosen to move to Finland. I therefore thought it would only be reasonable for me to maintain a non-confrontational and understanding attitude. I would often notice myself laughing along when they laughed, although I had not understood a word they had said. I recall a colleague once noticing this and asking me ‘you are laughing…did you get that?’ I replied ‘no…but it sounded like there was good reason to laugh…and I like laughing’, the person replied with a big smile ‘oh…that’s really cute’. In the situation it seemed the “natural” thing to do. In hindsight, I have come to recognise this as a “strategy” to gain acceptance as an insider and someone who belongs. In many ways my approach to this was rewarded. As people became familiar with me and used to my presence in the department, speaking English around me became the norm. In more unofficial events, such as luncheons or bar visits after work, I experienced how people would naturally switch from Finnish to English whenever I was around. I noticed how they would sometimes continue speaking in English when I left the group e.g. to use the bathroom or make a phone call. By avoiding confronting people when they spoke in Finnish; by staying out of the ‘language debate’ in the department (where a very controversial email correspondence on the department emailing list took place), I did not position myself as an outsider or remind others that I was some sort of an outsider requiring “special

23 Such conclusions have, for instance, been drawn on the basis of feminist conversation or media representation analysis.
treatment”. Nor did it remind them that they might not always have been as inclusive as I think they largely are and want to perceive themselves as being. When asked directly I would express my honest opinion: that there should be room for both Finnish and English. With time I realised how several people, when complaining to me about certain changes at the university, e.g. in relation to the recruitment of international personnel and language policies, would only later remember that I was one of those foreigners. They would add, ‘oh, but Rebecca, you are different...it’s another thing with you’. My difference or outsidersness, it would seem, would be noticed in other ways and at different times.

Thirdly, I learned from conversing with Professor Susan Wright during a two-month research visit at Aarhus University’s Department of Education in the winter of 2013, that I should make English a part of my study. I learned to ask whether, how and to what extent the English language is itself part of the social relations of academic work. What speaking and conducting my research in English did to my position as a researcher vis-à-vis my participants, and to my ability to maintain and produce their presence as subjects. How writing and conversing in English is itself producing and being produced by the ruling relations of changing academia (see e.g. Meriläinen et al. 2008; Saarinen 2012).

While there would arise situations I could not follow and there would be a few people I could not engage in fruitful conversation with in English, people generally spoke it at a high level. English had been institutionalised as a central part of education on all levels of education when Finland began aligning itself with the Western markets during the 1970s. Language barriers were therefore not a significant obstacle for my study. The things I could not ‘pick up’ in naturally occurring ‘real time’ conversations I would ask someone from the group to explain to me. On this basis I could decide whether further inquiry or perhaps even interviews would be in order.

4.3.2 Insider/outsider, both/neither?

While Finland, the university, the department and discipline were strange to me, I was also, as an accepted PhD student in the doctoral program of the University and department, an active member of the community. I was embodying the practices and learning the codes on more or less equal terms with my participants. Like my research participants I too was being confronted with opportunities, pressure and expectations affecting me professionally and personally, at times causing stress, anxiety and feelings of being excluded or unappreciated. Therefore, I was not only a participant observer (an outsider attempting to become insider), but also an observant participant (an insider seeking more outsider distance). The shift between those two roles would be subtle and ongoing (Moeran 2009; Alvesson 2009). While the participant observer for a planned or pre-determined period of time engages in systematic observation, the observant participant is, first and foremost, a community participant, occasionally complementing that with focused observation and thick descriptions, when something revealing took place.
I too am a junior female academic, but that is not the same as saying that I am located similarly within the social relations to all those junior female academics I spoke to and whose standpoint(s) I have taken. Our social backgrounds sometimes differed in terms of class, age, sexuality, positions in life, of family and children, particular experiences and opportunities within changing academia. While I never felt I was engaging in unethical disloyalty – being untrue to myself or to them in order to gain access to information – I would, at times, feel that I had to work to convince them that my political sympathy was with them and their experiences, not the institution or the institutional ways of knowing. This meant providing comfort, understanding and support to the extent possible. It was also at such moments that the line between friendship, colleague and researcher became blurred. Sometimes I found the best solution was simply not to tell them too much about what I had been up to. At other times I had to force myself not to become defensive or sad when some of my participants in moments of insecurity, frustration and self-deprecation would express ‘yeah, but you have an advantage because you are a foreigner…they like foreigners here’, ‘when I came to your office today I felt like such a lousy worker… you have been working all weekend and your calendar is laying there in front of you full of deadlines and things you're are doing and achieving…and I haven’t worked the last three days because I have had to take care of my family’ or ‘not everyone has the academic habitus you have…’. Such remarks positioned me as an outsider, as someone very unlike them, someone they perceived as being closer to the Aalto ideal. Indeed, compared to the institutional ideals, I had a good standing I had the “right” age; I had embarked on my doctoral studies immediately after finalising my Master's thesis; I had family, schooling, and educational background which had provided me with the confidence to work independently; due to my mother being Irish I was in a position to write and teach in fluent English; I had no children or family obligations to “distract” me; In the context of Finland I had no social network outside my work to take my time; and I had two supervisors who were both able and willing to support me academically, personally and practically. Nonetheless, I had no particular wish to be identified with the Aalto ideal, because it represented values and a social organisation that I did/do not subscribe to.

Thus, while such remarks often left me feeling sad, frustrated, ashamed, and excluded, it drew my attention to the practices and texts that mattered and made a difference in the everyday lives of my participants. Firstly, the fact that internationalising and attracting foreign scholars was very much at the forefront in the policies, strategies and rhetoric. Secondly, that the competitive logic and career-oriented individualism embedded in the new career path system allows little space for other concerns and obligations in life. Thirdly, the fact that there is an increased pressure on doctoral students and everyone else to deliver research of high quality and publications in top journals, while (paradoxically) an increasingly limited amount of time is granted for doing so. All of which is combined with the fact that the need for support, and the supply of support, is experienced as varying greatly.
Was the fact that we did not always share experiential basis or location within the social relations a problem for gaining access to the experience and producing the standpoint of junior female academics? My answer is no. Firstly, my ambition was never to approach or describe true inner feelings, but rather what their activities, and accounts of their activities, could tell me about the social and ruling relations that shape them. Secondly, the concrete standpoint, positions and experiences among junior female scholars are heterogeneous. Experiential overlaps may occur across standpoints, just as antagonism may very well occur within a standpoint position in the social relations. Even if I had been positioned exactly like them within the social relations there is no guarantee that I would have better understood or represented them. Common and shared positions – in terms of gender, class, age, motherhood, position – do not automatically lead to common understanding. However, becoming increasingly aware of my own position within the social relations, differences and overlaps between me and my participants and my partiality in terms of taking sides politically, enabled me to see and recognise certain things – though ‘blinding’ me to others. This is the nature of all research and I think reflexive awareness of this became one of my most important analytical tools. (Haraway 1988; Harding 1993; Bhavnani 1991 and 1993; Wolf 1996).

Taking this reflexive and critical perspective would also mean that the insider/outsider or both/neither distinction, based on what sometimes amounts to rather essentialising identity positions, is perhaps not as important for performing a successful Institutional Ethnography as “the quality of relations” (Narayan 1993, 671). That is, the quality of my mapping of the social and ruling relations in a manner recognisable to those whose standpoint I have taken; the quality with which representation and attempts at minimising objectification happens (Walby 2006; Widerberg 2007).  

### 4.3.3 Friendship and bonding in the field

Some of these collegial and research-participant relations became friendships (some closer than others). Shared views, experiences and perceptions of issues at hand developed, in some cases, into more emotional attachments and degrees of identification. It is not always straightforward whether the friendship grew out of the intimacy of the interviews, or whether agreement to participate in my research and interview, in the first place, grew out of friendship. It was, I think, a bit of both. My friendships would include quite a few of the junior female academics whose standpoint I had taken. A glance at the field notes and interview transcripts involving conversations or activities with friends reveal dynamics, complexities and dilemmas distinct from other participant relations. What is particularly characteristic of them is their “exchange based” nature. As Nic Beech et al (2009) observes:

> …friends will not start out with a contract-like mindset of measurements of the relative value of exchanges that typify low-trust relations. However, that is not to say that friends do not make assessments of equity in what each puts into the
relationship, and feelings of inequity can provoke a diminution of the friendship (Beech et al 2009, 199)

Here the question of “power and influence” also became important, that is, “how far should I follow my friends influence and how far should I try to influence my friend?” (Beech et al 2009, 204). On the one hand I am a researcher trying to learn from their actual everyday activities, choices and the resultant consequences: to see beyond the social ‘front stage’ and gain access to the not so readily available ‘back stage’ (Goffman 1959), and, in doing so, influencing as little as possible. On the other, as a friend such insight into the ‘back stage’ of social appearances and self-presentation, may provoke emotional identification or a wish to have them change their activities, choices and perceptions; attempts at relieving them of some of their burdens by offering help; or, in some cases, standing up for them in the face of direct or indirect criticism from others.

Emotional support and alliances are, of course, part of a friendship, but, inevitably, will affect the research. Depending on your epistemological and ethical lens this may be perceived as being problematic.

Friendship can provide a framework that allows critical engagement and provocative dialogue [...] the closeness between friends can enhance mutual subjective understanding and the ability of the researcher to build theory based on an ‘insider view’. However, if the researcher does not maintain sufficient distance, he or she runs the risk of accepting one version of the events as the truth and of being unable to critically engage with alternative perspectives. (Beech et al 2009, 203).

Conceptualising appropriate “distance” is extremely difficult. However, a couple of points should perhaps be mentioned here. Mapping the social from a particular standpoint is the objective of Institutional Ethnography. Essential for carrying out such a task is the development of critical sensitivity, reflexivity, learning to detect institutional talk and extract the actual embodied activities behind it. Writing up field notes, transcribing interviews and reading through those texts are an important analytical rehearsal and litmus test for ascertaining my level of success. On the basis of such reflexive readings I could also learn and develop as a researcher, in relation to all my participants, including those who are friends. Sometimes I would also, specifically drawing on the possibility for “provocative dialogue” that friendship allows for, “test” alternative positions and counter arguments on my friends, learning more about them and their standpoint through their replies. I never experienced that they would be circumspect in disagreeing with me, if that was indeed the case. I think that the “Finnish” preference for direct communication, combined, perhaps more importantly, with our identities as academics – that
necessarily involves a certain amount of comfort with (constructive) discussion and disagreements – was also at play here.

Friendships and bonding, like all other relations, are also shaped within the social relations of changing academia. Gendered, classed, generational, disciplinary, national and other relations enter as organisers of friendship. The relations are not fixed or atemporal, but dynamic and continuously produced through struggle and negotiation. When negotiating multiple roles and relations in the field – simultaneously researcher-participant, colleagues and sometimes friends – tensions and dilemmas arise accordingly. At certain stages of the data production and research process particular roles would take precedence. Despite the ambition of doing research with and for people, the significance of the fact that, ultimately, the researcher is the one making the final choices and writing it up, should not be downplayed. Therefore, in any Institutional Ethnography there is an inbuilt tension and a dilemma to continuously recognise and overcome. Doing institutional ethnographic research is to take a particular standpoint and work to challenge objectification and the ruling relations of research. However, this can only be achieved if the researcher openly recognises, and remains reflexive about their own participation in those ruling relations when engaging with the participants, in analysis and writing up the research (Wolf 1996; Walby 2006; Smith 2006). Of course, in the spirit in Institutional Ethnography, neither participation in the ruling relations nor the exact nature of these relations can be prematurely assumed, but must itself be subject of empirical investigation.

### 4.3.4 Emotions in Knowledge production

Being a member of the community I was studying meant that I could not put aside my own emotional responses and development. In mainstream positivist research, emotions have largely been considered something beyond our control and as something that interferes with or disrupts rational thought, judgment and observation. For that reason emotions have been considered an issue that should preferably be neutralised in knowledge production.

Feminist scholars have long taken up and challenged such positivist emotion/reason dichotomies in knowledge production (Jaggar 1989). They have contributed with theorisation of emotions as social constructs. Indeed, while there are emotional similarities across diverging contexts and time (e.g. love and anger), emotions are also socially and culturally diverse. There are divergent notions of what is recognised as emotion or “what emotions are”; and what counts as appropriate ways of expressing them. There are also differences in terms of what the “conceptual and linguistic resources of a society” make possible and limit in terms of recognising and expressing one’s emotions (e.g. romantic love is a particularly Western construct and phenomenon).
The emotions that we experience reflect prevailing forms of social life. For instance, one could not feel, or even be, betrayed in the absence of social norms about fidelity: it is inconceivable that betrayal or indeed any distinctively human emotion could be experienced by a solitary individual in some hypothetical presocial state of nature. There is a sense in which any individual’s guilt or anger, joy or triumph, presupposes the existence of a social group capable of feeling guilt, anger, joy, or triumph. This is not to say that group emotions historically precede or are logically prior to the emotions of individuals; it is to say that individual experience is simultaneously social experience (Jaggar 1989, 151).

As human beings radically entwined with this world and a particular local space, emotions constitute important navigation tools, consciously and subconsciously making us aware of the I/me/mine in relation to, and relationally constructed in the them/us/their. This position is aligned with the epistemic collapse of the mind/body dichotomy and the ontology of human nature and the social characteristic of Institutional Ethnography (Smith 2005). In my work I do not make use of the concept “culture” as a “coherent, homogenous, atemporal and ahistorical whole”. Such a conceptualisation would be objectifying, and hide the struggles that lay behind a given notion achieving position as representative, obscuring the divergences that exist within such apparent wholes, and similarities that may exist across apparently diverging cultures. Through failing to recognise this one may end up inadvertently feeding “stereotypes and imaginaries that help to perpetuate [...] subordination” (Medina-Doménech, Esteban-Galarza & Távora-Rivero 2014, 161). In contrast to this, I speak of “ways of knowing”, allowing the opening up of such terms as something processual, always in process of becoming and shaped within translocal relations of ruling.

While emotions are experienced differently by each individual, they are also shaped within the social relations. Emotional work is not distributed equally but organised relationally, in relations of dependency and interdependency with others. (Medina-Doménech, Esteban-Galarza & Távora-Rivero 2014; Lynch 2014). I came to consider my own and my participants’ emotional responses as important for opening up the social relations and social organisation of changing academia. Indeed, the emotions I would come to recognise in myself and in them as triumph, care, sympathy, frustration, shame, fear and anger, became part of understanding practices leading to institutional recognition or lack thereof.

Differences between myself and my research participants, as well as between my participants, in terms of what and how emotions were expressed – what one feels disturbed, frustrated, proud or happy about – could help me understand both my own as well as their tapping into the work of reproducing the ruling relations and enacting the institutional intentions. One participant, for instance, was somewhat dismissive towards my many conference and research visits abroad, making me feel ashamed of myself. The emotional reactions of us both made me aware that I was taking part in reproducing
ruling ways of knowing excellence and the social organisation of the community. When my participants spoke about ‘foreigners as automatically privileged’ and referring to me being ‘one of those people Aalto likes’, it helped me reflect on our comparative standpoints within the social relations. Indeed, such comments and emotional reactions helped me make visible and problematize the activities I had engaged in, without thinking much about it, from their subject position. To be specific, it helped me explicate what type of people in terms of class, ethnicity, sexuality and gender and so forth are actually in a position to approximate the prevailing notions of the good or ideal academic. That is, explicate what kind of taken-for-granted and normalised advantages, orders and privileges are concealed in the prevalent ideals.

Illuminating emotions served to highlight experienced disjunctures and provided me a means to interpret the social organisation of changing academia. By doing so I have not taken the point of departure that emotions are somehow purer and less distorted by ideology and discourse (see e.g. Jaggar 1989). Rather they too are shaped in social and ruling relations, and can themselves be altered, resisted and perhaps even used politically. The people whose standpoint I had taken, and my own, were examples of how fear, shame, anger and frustration can be turned into an important driver for critical engagement with the institution and institutional ways of knowing.

As a general rule I would note revealing emotional experiences soon after they had occurred. At other times a certain event that I had not taken note of earlier, would suddenly come back to me days, weeks, and (in a few cases) months later. I would plot it down although I could not remember the exact date of its occurrence, indicating in my notes that this was memory work (see e.g. Widerberg 2001). I would attempt to explain why I suddenly recalled this, what might have triggered it, and why I thought of it as important now though not before. An event or experience that had caused no notable or apparent emotional reaction at one point in time, may very well, with the increased embodied engagement in a particular local setting and its norms, become reinterpreted as significant.

4.4 The where, what, whom and how of observations

With time I became increasingly familiar with the field and developed a sensitivity that allowed me to scan the setting for relevant insights. Sometimes I would have planned to participate as an observant at a particular event, at other times it would occur spontaneously in the course of my daily activities and interactions with colleagues and friends. My observations would be conducted at research seminars, parties such as ‘the opening of the academic year’ where rewards are handed out to “the researcher of the year”, “the teacher of the year”, “supervisor of the year” etc. They would be performed at doctoral seminars/courses, at events hosted by publishing houses providing guidelines as to ‘how to get published’, and at career opportunity information seminars hosted by Human Resource managers. I would take as detailed notes
as possible, on my phone or in a note book, and sometimes I would make small sketches to remember, for example, seating arrangements. My field notes would, as a rule of thumb, be written up within two days. I kept a vignette diary on my computer where I would make “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973). After having indicated date, place, people present and why I was there I would describe in as much detail as possible what and how it something happened, and who had been involved. I would also note on any reference to texts and/or events, my own influence on the setting. In short, I would explicate the event as a social gesture.

After three years I had over 100 pages of font size 10 vignettes. In my analytical work, with few exceptions, I do not so explicitly draw on my field-notes. The observational data mostly provides a context for my interviews. They would focus on: shifting priorities and values in terms of academic work, practices of evaluating quality; debates, struggles and negotiations between different interests at departmental, school or university level; individual level challenges and frustrations with management: and work tasks or difficulties at home as a result of changes. They contain important insights into local activities, experiences and practices and allow me to carry out a more careful mapping of the social and ruling relations of changing academia. In that way all observations are relevant, at least indirectly, for carrying through indexical readings and interpretations of how my interviewees’ accounts became shaped the way they did. Those vignettes I have used directly in my empirical analytical chapters have required some ethical considerations. In descriptions involving personal accounts I have intentionally omitted details that would make the person recognisable or be potentially harmful. Furthermore, I have cut out details that were not actually necessary for showing how an experience was shaped by particular social and ruling relations. I have listed three categories of participant observation/observant participation in the table below: “Public events at school of Economics”, “Other events at university premises” and “informal events”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Observation/ Observant Participation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Public Events at School of Economics          | - Introduction seminar: the Doctoral Programme (did not ask for permission to observe) 2010
|                                               | - HR, Head of Doctoral Programme and Dean’s Career information event (did not ask for permission to observe)
|                                               | - Publishing house representative visits, information for Doctoral students and others on how to achieve publication (did not ask for permission to observe and use field notes in my research)
- Speeches and awards granting, at the Dean’s ’Christmas’ and ’Opening of the Academic Year’ school parties.

Formal invitations had been sent out via newsletters or email to all staff members and Doctoral students at the school. These were public events in which I participated on equal footing with my participant, often related to establishing and ritualising the requirements, formal agenda and institutional intentions of the school and the University at large. For these events I did not ask permission to observe.

Other events at University premises

- Coffee and Lunch meetings (would always ask for permission to observe and use, if what happened seemed relevant but related to my participants’ rather than my own experiences. If it was my own emotional reaction that became relevant I would characterise them as ‘observant participant’ and not ask for permission)

- Casual meetings in hallway or kitchen area (would always ask for permission to observe and use. If it was my own emotional reaction that became relevant I would characterise them as ‘observant participant’ and not ask for permission)

- Doctoral course on ‘Communication for Research Purposes’ and ‘Qualitative Research’ (did ask for permission to observe and use in research since I would characterise these as ‘observant participant’ situations. If, however, I was interested in not only my own reactions, but those of others, I would ask. I also had lengthy email correspondence with one Lecturer and other course participants, on their experiences, following the particular event)

- ‘Meet the Editors’ session at an international conference (asked for permission to record session and use for my research)

- Summer seminar (did not carry out observations; however, some other seminar participants placed me in an emotionally challenging situation by doubting whether I could be trusted not to make observations despite not having their consent – I made reflexive notes on my own subject position in the field)

Informal Events

- Bar and restaurant visits

- Pikku Joulu (translates directly into “Small Christmas”, in English, a more correct translation would be “Office Christmas Party”)

- Due to my multiple roles as simultaneously that of colleague, friend and researcher events such as these where ethically complex. I would take notes on these if they seemed relevant, but only use them directly in my research if having received a more in-depth understanding in an interview with at least some of the participants either before or after the event occurred. Using insights arising from such events (except auto-ethnographic), required, I think, more carefully explicit permission.

4.5 The where, what, whom and how of interviews

Interviews, as with all other methods of data production, can take many shapes and forms depending on one’s ontological and epistemological commitments. Furthermore, they can be planned and carried out in numerous ways and the choice must necessarily be justified on the basis of one’s particular research interests, i.e. the data one needs to answer the research
question. Interviewing for Institutional Ethnography is not different from other methods of inquiry in every respect. That which constitutes good practice in terms of gaining access, building rapport, narrowing down interests and focus, active listening and so forth are the same (see e.g. Kvale 2003; Flick 2002). What makes interviews for Institutional Ethnography special is that the purpose is to reveal how the account, experience, and activity reported has become socially organised. In the accounts of everyday embodied activities/experiences I look for textual and other coordinative cues. The ruling relations, as specified in chapter 2, are textual forms of coordination. I use the interviews to investigate how the organisational and institutional texts, knowledge, discourses are activated, how they shape local experience, seeking to illuminate the link between the local lived experience and the translocal processes of administration and governance. (DeVault & McCoy 2006). The goal with the interviews is not to generate representative samples or to make generalisable claims, but rather to enable description of generalising effects. I understand my participants to be subjects that are shaped within a complex of discourses and organisational processes. “The institutional processes may produce similarities of experience, or they may organize various settings to sustain broader inequalities; in either case, these generalizing consequences show the lineaments of ruling relations”. (DeVault & McCoy 2006, 18).

The process of data production, including interviewing, was characterised by many iterations. I decided to start from the junior female academics. My point of entry was their everyday activities, and their experience of a disjuncture between their actual activities and the institutional textual representation of these. I wanted to become familiar with their everyday activities, work and interpretation of their situation before speaking to male junior academics, professors, academic managers and so forth. This would also allow me start my interviews with the other groups on the basis of the themes and questions highlighted by the junior female academics. Although I was interested in the actual work and experiences of male junior academics, professors and academic managers and so on, these interviews had other purposes and were therefore formed and planned somewhat differently. In addition to understanding their actual work and experiences, I wanted to learn how they viewed and were positioned in relation to the disjunctures and problematics noted by junior female academics. Depending on the interviewee in question – junior female academics, junior male academics, professors, academic managers, top managers, administrative personnel – I would, correspondingly, draw on slightly different interview approaches mainly diverging in the extent to which I made use of discussion guide.

The schools of Aalto University have very different gender compilations and histories for dealing with and questioning gender inequality. The schools of Art and Design are female dominated. The school of Economics is male dominated, though women nonetheless comprise a much larger proportion of the students, faculty and professorships there than they do in, for instance, the schools of Science and Technology. Moreover, a significant level of variation can be detected across disciplines and units. In the school of Economics, for
instance, women dominate the field of communication, are more or less absent in the fields of finance and economics, but have a better numerical standing the fields of management and organisation studies. The majority of my participants were from the school of Economics. More particularly, they came from disciplines, such as my own, which had attracted a relatively high proportion of women. Moreover, these units were characterised by fostering and celebrating critical awareness of gender related issues and supportive solidarity towards motherhood was treated as a taken-for-granted. The standpoint of junior female academics that I have chosen must be seen as built into such a context. Focusing my observations and interviews on members of such disciplines and units had the advantage of allowing me to focus on the subtle and often unnoticed local (re)production of gendered social relations.

In order to get a sense of how the ruling relations worked across different local settings I also conducted interviews with academics from other schools and disciplines. The main task for me was to have enough informants to gain a sense of the generalising effects of ruling relations across diverging local and disciplinary settings. Drawing on existing higher educational research, to complement the interviews would help me gain further insight into the disciplinary specificities. Such research would also enable me to understand the extent to which people across disciplinary fields were affected differently by the strategic priorities, practices for evaluating quality and management style following the merger and reforms in ways that may, or may not, not work in their interest.

I have summarised information about my participants in the tables below. Table 2 offers an overview of breakdowns in position, gender and style of interview. Table 3 offers an overview of position and institutions/organisational affiliation of my participants. The column ‘Amount’ does not refer to amount of interviews, but rather the number of participants. The tables do not, therefore, account for the fact that I conducted more than one interview with some participants over the years. Nor does it account for the innumerable informal “on-the-spot” conversations that took place over the years I spent performing field work. Dividing people into categories, as I have done below, can be problematic since it obscures the fact that many academic managers are also functioning professors, junior academics are often involved in administrative work, and so on. However, I have decided to make the categorisation in accordance the role that was the primary focus of the interview. That point of departure, however, did not mean that I prematurely closed myself off from understanding their actual work and activities excluded from or hidden in the particular category in question.

Table 2: Interviewee breakdown in terms of position, gender and style of interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Style of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior academic</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Unstructured ethnographic narrative interviews (Flick 2002, 90-91 and 97-102); as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Interview Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Interview carries on and in follow up interviews these might develop into problem-centred interviews (Flick 2002, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Key Informants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professor</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Semi-Structured problem-centred interview (Flick 2002, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Manager</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Semi-Structured problem-centred interview (Flick 2002, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, school level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, department level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Managers</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Semi-structured problem-centred interview (Flick 2002, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, University level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, University level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative personnel</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Semi-structured problem-centred interview (Flick 2002, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, University level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, School level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female, Department level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3:** Interviewee position and institutional/organisational affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional affiliation</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Economics</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Juniors</em> (Units: Organisation Studies; Communication; International Business; Marketing)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Professors</em> (Organisation Studies; IB; Entrepreneurship; Information Systems)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Managers</em> (School and department level)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Administrative</em> (Organisation studies)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Art, Design and Architecture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I have used interview quotes in my analysis I decided to use pseudonyms and replace potentially revealing details with more general information in [brackets]. This has been carried out to obscure the identity of my participants.

4.5.1 Drawing the boundaries of the standpoint: on the label “junior female academic”

As mentioned, during my initial fieldwork I identified the standpoint, disjuncture and problematic of everyday life, which then became the point of departure for my research questions, process and analysis. Over time, as will become clear in my empirical analytical chapters, I adopted different perspectives on the problematic and related disjunctures.

I defined “junior academics” as those in the final stages of their PhD, Post-doc researchers, lecturers and project researchers (either having completed their doctorate degrees or in the process of doing so) and, at the time of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juniors</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors (Units: Architecture and Film/Media studies)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative (HR)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools of Science and Technology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors (Unit: Polymer Technology)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors (Units: Engineering design and production, and Microbiology)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers (Unit: Design Factory)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central University level</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Doing the “Ideal” academic: gender, excellence and changing academia

Rebecca W.B. Lund

Interview, standing outside the Tenure Track System. The junior female academics who became key informants were people I had become personally acquainted, whose everyday work life, anxieties, critiques and frustrations I had become familiar with through casual conversation. Knowing these people as well as I did also means that using the “label” junior, must be explained more carefully. For these are people, as I have explained in my earlier outline of standpoint epistemology, who are reflexive about themselves in the context of the institution; they are critical of the institution and standard institutional labelling and both were a recurring topic throughout the research process, and, at a research seminar at my own department, a controversial one. This seminar was organised by a small group of female academics with the intention of discussing their future role and coping strategies within the department. The quote below is from a conversation I had with my friend and key informant who had finished her doctoral studies and was, at the time of the interview and seminar, working as a lecturer:

Liisa: …at one point we were asked so what is a doctoral candidate …are they students or junior scholars …and then I was saying that in my view I am definitely not and I never felt that I was a student… particularly to me because I had already been working. The term student indicates that you are this kind of person who just takes courses and whatever. Anyway, we were discussing it and [this female Professor] reacted by saying well I still consider myself a student…and I said ‘yeah I am also a student for the rest of my life’…I don’t mean that I already know everything but my objection is more to the position of students …it is implied that they are managed and somebody else knows better what you should doing and studying…[…] and then [a male professor] said ‘well I really think that once you are in the programme and you haven’t graduated, you are a student and beneath the teacher and the teacher holds you under his or her thumb’, and he was really rather radically indicating the power relations …and everybody was reacting quite strongly to his comment at that point...

Rather junior female academics would offer alternative labels, such as “doctoral researcher”. Indeed, the standard labels are problematized, because they reproduce organisational hierarchies, and because they hide a great deal of experiences and actual work routinely performed by these in the everyday. In constructing and choosing to use the label, junior female academic, it would seem that I have chosen to speak from the standpoint of the institution, rather than that of these women. Furthermore, I am the one drawing boundaries. Some people (i.e. male junior scholars academics or senior ones) are being excluded from the standpoint, although they might very well have overlapping experiences and political positions.

My choice of the label ‘junior’ does not necessarily refer to my participants’ age but rather to someone’s “place” within the academic hierarchy. It serves at least two analytical purposes. Firstly, it draws attention to the fact that...
the institutional setting these women are junior in the sense that they have very little influence in terms of defining the ruling relations that categorise, evaluate, compare and regulate their activities. Secondly, and associated, it has proven to be an analytically useful label. While it makes invisible a considerable amount of their activities and experiences, it can also be used strategically to draw attention to the social relations that are the source of this organisation, i.e. the processes that highlight certain activities and downplay others. Such activities become central in reproducing the gendered, classed and generational social organisation of academia and academic excellence. Our conversations about the problematics and disjunctures of everyday life revolved around such processes and the sense of loss of control, and will be explicated more carefully in the empirically analytical chapters. Moreover, for practical purposes – in contrast to more specific labels such as ‘doctoral researcher’, ‘Post-doctoral researchers’, ‘lecturer’, ‘researcher’ – allows me to draw more flexible borders in terms of incorporating experiences and types of work carried out by those who stand outside the tenure track system.

Equally, limiting the standpoint to ‘female’ involves drawing boundaries that would seem to prematurely exclude community members with experiences similar to those of junior female scholars. So who am I to make that decision? I recognise fully that there are men who have similar/overlapping experiences and report frustrations very much in accordance with that of the female academics whose standpoint I have taken. Nevertheless, when I have chosen to take the perspective of and focus on women, it is contextually justified. The male academics I spoke to were also concerned with work-life balance. They also wanted to spend more time with their children and partners at home, and they were also feeling stressed about their work and career opportunities. Despite this expressed concern it also became clear, after having gained access to statistical reports, that men in the context of this university, and in academia more generally, were much more favourably positioned in terms of approximating the “world class” ideals. This approximation, I recognise, is hard for everyone, men as well as women, but it is harder for some than it is for others. I will show that in more detail in my analytical chapters. The fact that I chose to take the standpoint of female academics does not mean that their experiences are identical, that they do not experience their position within the social relations differently or that their experiences or analysis of them do not change over time. Indeed, the standpoint is not granted women as a unified category, but it is granted women whose experiences help me question the institutional order. The standpoint is to be seen as a methodological point of entry for shedding light upon social relations from within them, without losing sight of experiences as negotiated and processual accomplishments.

My interest was to explore from the standpoint of junior female scholars with obligations in terms of family and children: who had positioned themselves as belonging to non-mainstream and underrepresented research traditions, and poorly positioned in the standardised competence evaluation criteria. I wished to understand and record their experiences of academic
work, becoming academics and thoughts related to establishing themselves within changing academia and changing career path structures. Similarly, I was interested in the social organisation and relations of academia; in how their daily activities in academia (re)produced and altered the gendered, organisation of academia in ways that were not necessarily in their best interest.

4.5.2 Interviewing junior female academics

Arranging the interviews

In a few instances I arranged to have interviews with academics I had not previously met. These would be people from some of the other schools within Aalto. In a snowball like method, it would usually be one of my more senior colleagues who knew them, had suggested me to make contact to them and, in a few cases, had initially asked them on my behalf. The example below illustrates how I would make contact.

Dear [name],

I am a PhD student at the unit for organisation studies at the School of Economics and received your contact details from [name]. My supervisors are Janne Tienari and Marja Vehviläinen. I am doing my dissertation on the social organisation of academic work in Aalto University from a gender perspective and am currently looking for female academics that would be willing to participate in an interview about changes in academic work.

I wonder whether you would be willing to participate in such an interview? I suspect that you are a very busy person and understand fully if you cannot fit this into your schedule - but I hope you will consider it since it would be good to have some more people represented from your school 😊

If you would like more information about my work or how I plan to use the data - please do not hesitate to ask and I will provide it by email or phone.

Kind regards,
Rebecca Lund

In most cases, however, I would ask people face-to-face whether they would consider participating in an interview. I wanted to avoid making people feel pressured to say yes. I was particularly sensitive to this in cases where my relationship to the potential interviewee was also one of friendship. Therefore, I would usually send an email afterwards with more information about my research interests, and making clear that there was no pressure and that they did not have to make a decision right away. The inquiries would maintain a professional, informative and friendly tone. I would explain what my research
was about, how I planned on using the data, and assure them that their identity would not be revealed. I would let them know that I was happy to provide more information about my work if they were interested and that the interview data would be used in a way that they felt comfortable with. This carried with it an underlying assurance that I was open to negotiation.

Once I had received agreement to participate (I do not recall experiencing any difficulties in getting access after the first 6 months), I would negotiate practicalities such as date, time and place. I would usually provide suggestions for time and date and ask to meet at a place of the interviewees’ choosing, where they would feel comfortable and safe about speaking openly. Sometimes that would be in their office, sometimes at a café over lunch or coffee, and sometimes at my office. I would usually suggest meeting within a time-frame of two weeks. Indeed, my interest in conducting the interview had often (not always) arisen on the basis of regular field contact. Therefore, the interview was arranged as a continuation of an “on-the-spot” conversation, albeit in a slightly more systematic fashion, as postponement might inhibit the conversational flow. However, given their busy schedules, I would also make clear that they were welcome to suggest other times.

In a few cases I asked junior female academics to prepare for the interview by thinking of concrete events, texts or artefacts that had made an impression and altered their priorities or way of working. This, however, did not turn out to be a fruitful approach. They would often bring a list of intriguing or provoking texts and events, but would not necessarily be able to account for how they mattered or what difference they had made for their own work. Instead I found that texts and events that mattered as coordinators of their everyday life, and accounts of how, would spontaneously develop from the conversation about everyday life and work. Therefore, the majority of interviews could be characterised as a conversation, since they would be carried out in a relatively open-ended and not overtly structured manner. Despite the conversational nature, I nonetheless term it ‘interview’ in order not to lose sight of the power difference that, despite my work to reduce objectification, necessarily exists between my participant and myself.

Doing the interviews

Before beginning the interviews I would ask for the informants’ time-frame in order to keep track. I would then offer them something to drink, brief them on my mode of inquiry, why I wanted to speak to them, and also inform them that they could ask me to pause the recording any time during the interview. All interviews would, upon explicit permission from the interviewee, be recorded and saved on my iPhone Voice Memo (which meant that interviews would occasionally be interrupted by a phone call), which was reliable and could be transferred directly onto my computer.

I would usually begin the interview by asking the informant to offer me basic information about themselves: their background, age, parents, education, life situation, civil status, current position, where they lived and so on (some kind of independent variables) (Widerberg 2001). This would help me get a sense of
them and worked well as a warm up exercise. Following this I would ask them to tell me about their normal daily routine: from getting up in the morning, going to university, until bedtime, with as many details as possible. Often they would start by telling me about their previous day’s experiences. If they for some reason didn’t feel that yesterday/yesternight wasn’t fully representative of their experience, they would, after explanation, choose another day. The interview would proceed in the order my participant provided me insights and clues.

I would not prepare an elaborate discussion guide to follow during the interview. Rather I would have available some general discussion topics and questions to maintain focus. In the table below I have provided an example of an interview guide.
### Table 4: Interview guide for junior female academics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background: parents, schools, education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current family situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current job situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More detailed description of the particular event that caused me to ask for an interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe a normal day/night, from when you get up until you go to bed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has she experienced changes in her department and in her everyday working life in academia</th>
<th>When and how did you notice changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did the changes show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have the changes affected your community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have they affected her work and daily schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does she manage to balance home/university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does she evaluate herself; how does she feel about her future opportunities in academia</th>
<th>Does she feel that she can live up to the University’s expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why/why not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the standards she uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and where did she learn about the standards /expectations she uses to evaluate herself and her opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. university websites; email conversations; seminars; the tenure track evaluation criteria; Development talks)</th>
<th>How did she learn about this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When and where did she first come across this text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and to what extent do these standards have an effect on her, and the department/community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References to discourses (e.g. gender; excellence; the politically correct discourse of gender egalitarian/gender equal division of labour)</th>
<th>How and to what extent does the discourse “speak” her own embodied experience/actuality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How, why and to what extent does she question the discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the particular questions that would arise during the interview were dependant on the themes and experiences the junior female academic related. I would bring paper and a pen to the interview to note down questions and keep track. The interviews worked as analytical rehearsals because these were
a unique chance for me to locate textual, discursive and institutional cues as to how their experiences were shaped and organised. The interviews were between 1.5 to 3 hours in length, and those who became key-informants in my research where interviewed more than once in order to take new developments into account.

**Dilemma: time pressure**

One of the issues my junior female participants referred to was time pressure; the sense of not being able to fulfil institutional expectations and complete various work tasks on time. In taking so much of their time for my own research purposes I realise that I contributed to, and even exacerbated, the time pressure they were experiencing. However, I nonetheless felt that it was justified because I believe that my participants benefitted from the time they put into the interview. Many of the participants expressed that they found my work important; experienced it as a relief to speak about their experiences; found it empowering to reflect on and put words on their experiences and explicate their frustrations. Furthermore, my attempt to research and communicate from their standpoint has been used actively to attempt altering the ruling relations of changing academia. I have used my research to actively engage in the work of the university’s equality committee as an expert. I have provided managers (wanted or unwanted) feedback on the recruitment system from this standpoint, and they have often expressed that they felt they had learned something new and important from speaking to me. I am not presuming that my research can take the credit for everything that has happened in regard to equality and diversity policies at the university. Indeed, many of the current policies in my view fall short in addressing the issues. However, my very concrete reflections, feedback and suggestions at least produced some important reflections that contributed to putting specific gender questions on the agenda (the extent to which it results in actual improvement remains to be seen). In some cases the potential benefits of this engagement unfortunately came too late: that is, after people have opted out or not received contract renewal. However, for others there may still be hope. In this manner the hours junior female informants gave me would, and I can only hope that they agree, be spent on work which, to a certain extent at least was carried out in their own best interest (Wolf 1996).

### 4.5.3 Interviews with junior male academics

Interviews with junior male academics were carried out in the same way as those with their female counterparts. I conducted these interviews without having premature expectations about whether or not they would have an advantage. In the interviews I wanted to uncover to what extent their experiences and work, and the way in which they were shaped, were comparable to those of junior female academics, and how. Again I did not seek to establish a representative sample, but rather to understand the extent of the generalising or difference establishing effects of the ruling relations and social coordination.
4.5.4 Interviews with professors

The focus of my interviews with professors was twofold: on the one hand to learn about their everyday experiences, work and activities; and, on the other, in regard to my standpoint, how the professors were positioned in terms of the problematics and disjunctures reported by junior female academics, and within the social relations of changing academia.

Arranging and conducting the interviews

I would often ask the professors in person whether they would consider participating, then ask them to think about it and then send an email with additional information. Interviews with senior faculty professors were typically shorter than those with junior faculty, since this group of participants often had more formal responsibilities, arrangements and meetings. In contrast to junior academics they would usually clarify beforehand exactly how much time they were able to put aside for the interview. In order to accommodate for the stricter time limits of senior staff, these interviews would be carried out in a semi-structured manner, with me having prepared a slightly more elaborate discussion guide in advance. This was not a problem since my focus was primarily on ascertaining how they were positioned in relation to the disjunctures and problematics of reported by junior female academics.

As with junior staff I began by asking a couple of questions clarifying their background and basic facts. Then I would ask them to describe a normal daily routine, and letting the conversation flow in a semi-structured manner from there. I would generally be playing a larger role structuring the interview, with questions such as: ‘what kind of work has recently taken a majority of your time’, ‘have you ever felt that your sex or gender influenced what you were able to do or be in this setting and if so, how’, ‘what kind of problems and challenges have you faced in relation to the changing priorities that have followed the Aalto merger e.g. in relation to your PhD students or researchers in your projects etc.’. The purpose behind this was to reveal how they were actively part of a sequence of action (re)producing the social and ruling relations shaping the experiences of junior female academics. As in the case of junior female academics, I did have particular interests, but posed open-ended questions and remained open for unexpected cues throughout the interviews.

Dilemma: being the researcher and the PhD student

While my experience of the interviews with professors was never negative or uncomfortable, it was clear to me that the dynamics were shaped by social relations of gender and hierarchy/position. My qualities and abilities as a PhD student and future academic were being evaluated. The evaluation and tutoring occurred (to different degrees) both in the email interactions before and after the interviews, as well as during the interviews. I also recall feeling nervous about interviewing them in a way I would not feel with junior scholars.

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24 Please find example of interview guide for professors appended as Appendix 1.
I was afraid of leaving a bad impression of my abilities. While ‘competence evaluation’ carries an assumption of objectivity, it became clear to me that there was a hidden standpoint within them, shaped by the conventions of the discipline they represent, and this manifested itself in both the male and female professors I interviewed. Some of the female professors were very encouraging, supportive and positive, expressing evaluative comments such as “you are a very good interviewer!” or “someone like yourself, whom I know to be a very good doctoral student, I would beforehand have found it very stressful to have given an interview, because my programme is so busy”. One male professor began to lecture me on how to use my data, although I had not asked for this. The same person also claimed that I, being a woman, was more likely to be successful in terms of finding academic employment afterwards, not necessarily because I was the most talented, but because they are “trying to change the old structures”.

4.5.5 Interviews with academic managers, top managers

It transpired that it would be necessary for me to speak to people who were centrally positioned in terms of formulating organisational texts and responsibility for securing their implementation within schools and departments. That is, top- and academic managers at department, school and university level. I needed to speak to them in order to understand the social and ruling relations informing and shaping their activities and perspectives, in manners ultimately affecting the lives of junior female academics.

Planning and doing interviews with managers

In order to gain contact to top and school level academic managers, I would usually start by sending them an email explaining who I was, what my research was about, why I wished to speak to them and who my supervisors were. In hindsight, I can recognise that informing them about my supervisors was also a strategy to gain access. The managers would all know at least one of them. Tienari is a tenured Professor at Aalto, has played an active role at the university, had been involved in and contributed to the Aalto merger research project and the concluding report. My referring to him would immediately lead to goodwill and trust from their side. Never once was I rejected, despite their extremely busy schedules.

In cases where their schedules had prevented them from replying to my email I would then attempt to phone. In such cases they would ask me to arrange a specific time and date for the interview via their secretary. The interview would always be carried out in their office or a meeting room close by it. In a few cases they would ask me to provide them with a discussion guide beforehand so they could prepare their answers. If this occurred, I would explain them that I did not conduct my interviews in an entirely structured manner, but preferred keeping the interview as open-ended as possible. I would provide them with some general discussion topics, but also make explicit that I could not guarantee that I would follow any particular predetermined order and warning them that other topics might unexpectedly
come up during the interview. These interviews would usually be between 1 – 1.5 hours in length.  
These interviewees, in every instance, suggested that I could return with additional questions via email; most of them I conducted interviews with twice during the course of my fieldwork. Reconnecting with them a second time allowed me to follow up on and get a sense of changes that had taken place – in terms of their work, priorities and activities; organisational policies and practices – since the previous interview.

**The challenging power dynamics**

I experienced that social relations of age, gender, hierarchy and professional background played their part. There was a somewhat significant difference between top managers and academic managers. One particular challenge in terms of the top managers was getting *behind* the textual talk: due to their role in the organisation they tended to adhere to the official and institutional language, codes and discourses. In an interview situation it was therefore much more demanding to avoid institutional capture.

Women are well represented in Aalto’s top management. In fact, this has been used in the university’s communication and marketing strategy, as a sign of Aalto being progressive and distinctive. There has been much debate about the extent to which the sex/gender of a manager actually affects the culture and style of management within a given organisation (Bagilhole & White 2011). My own experience is that the defining difference is not so much in the sex/gender per se, since both men and women can *do* masculine and feminine management. Instead, I believe the difference in how management is conducted can be identified from how managerial *competence* is defined and hence (re)produced. At Aalto the majority of the administrative top managers come from either a career in the corporate world, or from sectors and disciplinary backgrounds (technological and natural sciences) very much dominated by men and masculine cultures. In the interview situations our diverging professional and disciplinary backgrounds shaped the dynamics. They would question and be curious about my ability to study gender both as a woman and as an employee of the researched organisation. They wondered whether I could be “objective” on these matters. Indeed, knowledge production as a thoroughly gendered activity is nowadays much more prevalent in fields of natural and technological sciences, than it is in, for instance, the social sciences (e.g. Haraway 1997). In one case a top manager started informing me that my questions were irrelevant and that I should return once I had thought more about what I wanted to learn about. In relation to questions of gender I sometimes experienced being put in my place by my informant. They would explain me that the university world was much better than the male dominated corporate/industrial *real world* they had come from.

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25 Please find example of interview guide and discussion topics for managers in Appendix 2
While the top managers I spoke to where both male and female, they were all, without exception, older than me. They were always formally dressed, polite and professional. They knew about my work, because I had told them about it, and they knew that I had knowledge and information they did not have. I became aware that this was a strength I could use to my advantage if they tried to belittle my research interests, approach or abilities as a researcher. In the early days of my doctoral research I would be somewhat disconcerted and insecure, and react by activating a friendly, subordinate, somewhat apologetic and “gendered strategy”. With time and experience I learned to react promptly and professionally by reciprocating in kind. This turned out to be a successful strategy.

The dynamics with the academic managers I spoke to, in contrast, were rather different. They had all forged careers in academia and were professors as well as managers, although their role as managers took up the bulk of their time. As with my interviews with professors I experienced that my abilities as a researcher were being evaluated. As was observable with the top managers they also (re)produced institutional codes and discourses when explaining their work, and I had to work to avoid institutional capture. However, unlike my interviews with the top managers I did not experience any attempt to downplay my research interests or abilities; they were encouraging and trusting and expressed their interest in participating in my research. This was, perhaps, most evident with the academic managers from the school of Economics. Due to their own ontological/epistemological positions and the notions of good research they subscribed to, they did not consider it problematic (and, if they did they did not consider it appropriate to express it) to the veracity of my work that I was a woman studying gender issues, or an employee studying in my own workplace. Moreover, they knew one of my supervisors well, and that probably also contributed to their trusting attitude. I nonetheless decided to employ a strategy of dialogue alongside the interview. I would suggest alternative ways of understanding an issue – e.g. that the tenure track evaluation criteria might not be as objective and neutral as they thought – and that created a more equal relation where they felt that they could also learn from me.

In general, the focus of my interviews with managers was more concentrated on their perspectives as managers, on the situation of the academics. I focused on their role in terms of implementing changes in strategy, practices and values, overseeing and responding to quality evaluations, at university, school and department level. Their personal perspectives were not central. However, if personal experiences or critiques of changes were revealed during the interview, and these were of relevance for my analysis, I would not to use them in a way that might reveal their identity.

4.5.6 Interviews with administrative personnel

My interviews with academic managers revealed that their management and work of implementing the new strategies was, to some extent, made possible through the work performed by administrative personnel. I decided to speak
to these staff members in order to understand the work processes and problems related to budgeting, negotiating the allocation of basic or strategic funding and planning the coming year, but mostly to understand their roles and positions, as created and defined after the merger, and therefore important for understanding changing logics in ways of managing and organising academia.

Planning and doing interviews with administrative personnel

I made contact to them via email or by approaching them directly. They were all women, older than me and happy to participate. We, however, spoke different languages: I am a researcher sometimes using rather theoretical language and they would use specialised technical administrative language that made no sense to me. I sometimes sensed that they were afraid that I was “testing them” and therefore of saying something “wrong”. However, the fact that I was utterly unfamiliar with their work and tasks meant that our relation would become more equal. I would make it clear to them that they were the experts and explain that I was not asking why, how and when questions because I doubted their choices, competence or intentions, but because of my own ignorance. Interviewing them was always a good experience. In one instance we had lunch together afterwards and she introduced me to some of her colleagues - who would tell me about their work. In general, meeting my administrative participants in the weeks, months and years following the interview would always be characterised by positive greetings and big smiles from both of us.

4.5.7 Transcription of interviews

Within a week or so after an interview I would carry out the transcription. Doing this turned out to be an important part of my analytical process. Before beginning the actual interview transcription I would copy and paste, into the same document, the email correspondence through which the arrangements had been made, and I would make a fairly detailed description of the setting of the interview. I would annotate the transcription with as much detail as possible: pauses, repetitions, tone of voice, interruptions, emotional cues, facial expressions, and so on. On the basis of the transcription I could detect and analyse institutional capture, note down what needed further explanation or clarification. With such clarifying questions in mind I could make further contact with the interviewee. I would add the additional information to the transcription in [brackets]. If the interviewee wished, I would give them a copy of the final transcript and ask them to return with any questions, concerns, corrections or additional information.

26 An entirely new administrative accountant function – the person has contract with the school but carries out work of planning and keeping control of funding and budgets at department and unit level
27 Please find example of interview guide for administrative staff in Appendix 3
4.5.8 Evaluating quality and trustworthiness of the data

With a few exceptions, my informants would tell me that they ‘trusted me’ and did not have any wish to check the interview transcript. Whether, and the extent to which this is a problem for the trustworthiness of my data should be reflected upon. In positivist quantitative approaches to data production reliability refers to questions of stability, precision and reproducibility of a measurement. Validity in this tradition refers to the extent to which data faithfully, truthfully and precisely represents a phenomenon. In qualitative ethnographic data production it makes more sense to, as Lincoln & Guba (1985) asserts, speak of trustworthiness. As an institutional ethnographer I am not particularly interested in distinctions between true and false data, but rather in mapping the social as it is experienced from a particular standpoint. I am interested in situated embodied knowledge. Moreover, I did not seek to generate generalisable results, instead seeking to identify and critique generalising effects of ruling relations within and beyond Aalto University, including reflexively engaging with the ruling relations of research (researcher-participant relations).

I was evaluating the credibility of the interview data through my ongoing contact with the junior female participants. This contact and interaction helped me ensure that they could recognise themselves in my descriptions. Although few read or returned to me about the transcript, people would, on the basis of access to my publications, papers and seminar presentations subsequently approach me if they felt I had overlooked something in my interpretation/representation of them. Moreover, my daily contact with several participants meant that I was continually discussing my findings and analysis, receiving insights that became useful in my non-objectifying and reflexive engagement with my data. This was part of the work I had to engage in to “constitute” the standpoint and subject presence, and ensure that I constantly returned to it (see Walby 2006).

Doing research and producing data was a co-constructive process. The different stages of the research process involved varying researcher-participant interaction, and processes of co-production or co-construction (Peshkin 1985; Silverman 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Phillips et al 2013). Nonetheless, in my role as chief data collecting tool I learned to become reflexive about what my position within the social relations meant for my research. This includes reflexivity in terms of what my position enabled and disabled, flagged and downplayed. This is so in terms of the choice of research topic, engagement with participants in the field, the planning and execution of the interview, and finally, in the course of the analysis. My own position within the social relations of gender, sexuality, class, profession, discipline, status, political commitments, age and values, all played their part in my research process (Peshkin 1985, 270). I could not have predicted which of my dispositions would be brought into play while in the field, but it is undisputable that they shaped my reactions, my conduct, and the lenses through which I would see things as a colleague, a researcher, and/or a friend. Equally, they would affect how my research participants would react to me,
what they would divulge and explain, hide or justify to me. Therefore, our similar or divergent positions within the social relations facilitated comprehension of the ways-of-knowing that emerged and those that did not initially receive attention (as well as those I probably still have not granted any attention to).

Over the course of the interviews and field contact I engaged in co-construction and work to reduce objectification, it was ultimately myself who made decisions about the particular focus, implementation in production, analysis of data and how to write up the research. My ambition was to challenge, rather than overthrow, the ruling relations of research through “reflexive, complexity- and context-sensitive analyses” (Phillips et al 2013, 4).

4.6 Connecting the local to the translocal: the texts

4.6.1 Body counts and statistical materials

I have taken a non-categorical approach to class, gender, age and so on. Statistical representations or constructions of income distribution, sex, age or occupational position play a small, yet significant, role in my work. Small because such an approach tends to mask the subject activities that produce and reproduce social and ruling relations, and, through this, the statistical representation. However, they also played an important one in that the statistics and numerical data helped me obtain a certain overview of the effects of social and ruling relations. Early in my PhD studies I had gained access to relevant EU statistics; some phone calls to statistics Finland had provided me and my colleagues (in connection to the production of a conference paper) insight. However, statistical breakdowns in terms of gender, nationality, position, salary, age at Aalto University took quite some time to obtain. Accordingly, throughout the first years of my doctoral research my only lead was a very crude body count of men and women, age intervals and statistics generated by the institutions before the merger. It would not be until 2012 that a trainee would be accepted by Aalto’s central HR team to produce a statistical report of gender and diversity. This took place because the Finnish Ombudsman for Equality had sent the rector a reprimand that gender and diversity related issues should be taken more seriously at Aalto. Consequently, an Equality Committee was established, requiring concrete facts, figures and insights to carry out their purpose. I personally helped the trainee with references and gave her feedback on some of her interpretations and analysis of correlations. At this stage, the management would not allow her to show me the full statistical report and, in email correspondences with a representative from Aalto’s HR team, I was firmly told that access to the statistics was not going to be granted any time soon. They feared that the numbers (that obviously did not fit into a setting and self-understanding as gender equal) “might be misunderstood” and “used for the wrong purposes”. It was one of my key informants, whose active participation in the Equality Committee at the time, made it possible for her to negotiate access to the statistics on my
behalf. I then negotiated with the HR personnel responsible how to reference the reports and, in return for access, promised to prepare a seminar with advice for their equality and diversity work based on my findings and research. This was in the summer of 2013; shortly afterwards I was invited to become an expert member of the committee. Despite the fact that many breakdowns were not made available in the reports, these statistics proved an important stepping stone for understanding generalising effects of ruling relations and therefore for mapping social relations.

4.6.2 Identifying the active texts

Beyond statistical material, I wanted to identify the concrete material texts – mediating concepts, ways of knowing, discourses and ideological codes – that people picked up and activated, and that made the concerting of activities possible.

Drawing on the logics of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), I have been interested in people’s “accomplishment and practice” (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 78).

At every point we attempt to view our topic or subject matter, the object of our inquiry, as practices, methods, procedures – as activity, rather than as an entity. (Smith 1990b, 90)

As people go about their everyday activities they are accomplishing something. They are (re)producing, and sometimes resisting, the institutions and social relations of changing academia.

People’s knowledge and actions are already organized before they talk about them, and they get worked up as they are talked about. Both those who live them and those who research them play a part in this working up. Institutional ethnographers believe that as people bring into being whatever happens, what they do and what they understand and can tell about are shaped through organized processes (Campbell & Gregor 2004, 78)

Marjorie Devault and Liza McCoy, defined institutions as “clusters of text-mediated [ruling] relations organized around a specific ruling function” (Devault & McCoy 2006, 17). Institutions appear, as earlier outlined, in specific local settings and are specialised in particular activities (e.g. writing, teaching). At the same time they activate and participate in trans-local standardising and generalising operations; a concept Smith (2005; 1990a; 1987) has termed ruling relations. The local-translocal connection is mediated
via authoritative materialised texts such as policies, strategic texts, evaluation criteria and regulations; and they appear in professional, academic and managerial discourses.

Through observations as well as interviews I have been searching for clues as to how my participants’ knowledge and experiences within a particular local setting became organised within the social and ruling relations. This included the ruling relations of research, and, accordingly, how their accounts became organised in their relation to me. While the material texts (and the discourses or ways of knowing they mediate) would be read, heard, seen, used differently by different people in different places, and at different times; these diverging interpretive practices are both a result of, and (re)constitutive of the social relations in which people are located. Studying the texts’ social coordinating role I looked, therefore, for two distinct, yet connected, processes (Smith 2006).

Firstly, I looked for clues as to how texts would coordinate my participants’ local activities, experiences and their account of them. What happened to everyday/everynight work when translocally operating texts entered as its organisers, and how were the actual activities and experiences reported to me made visible/invisible, flagged/downplayed or included/excluded in the virtual reality of the texts that categorise, represent, evaluate and measure their work? How was the translation of the actual into the institutional, via people’s reproduction of textual ways of knowing, essential for comparing, managing and making accounting people and work that would otherwise remain incomparable, unmanageable and unaccountable? How are people’s activation of the texts central for making the institutional actionable? Equally, a text would only matter if it was, in fact, activated and used. This is central for achieving a deeper understanding of how the social organisation actually happens. To accomplish this, I would ask questions such as: what does that mean; from which texts/events/people did you learn it; how does it work for you? This would propel me further into mapping the social organisation, and the sequences-of-action that bring it into being.

Secondly, I would begin to make sense of and interpret the text referred to by my participants, by locating it within a translocal intertextual complex. Smith has, in that connection, argued that “higher order texts regulate and standardize texts that enter directly into the organization of work in multiple local settings” (Smith 2006, 79), arguing for a rather hierarchical view of intertextual relations. Conversely, my point of departure has rather been that a hierarchical relation cannot be assumed; the actual relations between the textually ordered activities must be carefully revealed through ethnography of the texts. Here cartographies, or other mapping techniques (e.g. Turner 2006), of texts can become helpful for clarifying how things become organised the way they do. Some textual relations may be hierarchical and others may not.

When engaging in data production I found that texts do not always work in a strictly standardising manner. Texts operate differently. Therefore I needed to distinguish between types of text – do ethnography of the texts – for understanding diverging texts organising potential. Some texts operate in
monological, standardising and authoritative ways and “speak” from a concealed and allegedly neutral standpoint (such as the tenure track evaluation criteria). Other texts, however, were more experience based, and “spoke” from very explicitly stated standpoints within the social relations (e.g. blog posts, critical essays, articles and emails conveying personal experiences related to changing academia and, more specifically, Aalto University). Reading such experiential texts also shaped the way people put words to their work or their experiences of the institutional shifts. Such texts brought about new layers of critical reflection and therefore they, too, work in experience-coordinating ways. As earlier stated, the reception, interpretation and activation of such experience-based texts would also be different depending on people’s position within the social relations. This position would, in one respect, influence the extent to which they applauded or needed to engage critically with the institution, yet, their engagement with the texts would contribute to the (re)production of social and ruling relations. Those privileged within and in relation to the ruling relations of changing academia would invoke or call for a change in attitude, which usually would involve individualising responsibility or moderating critique in favour of optimism towards institutional intentions. Despite this, one should not make the mistake of prematurely assuming who are privileged, or that privilege necessarily involves an uncritical attitude in all places or all times, it is more complex than this. I would, however, claim that it is a coordination that operates in different ways than that of standardising texts, since it would allow more space for negotiation.

In the table below I offer the reader an overview of examples of divergent types of texts I have drawn on in my empirical analytical chapters.
Table 5: Different types of texts that shape local practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritative institutional texts</th>
<th>Specialised standardising texts</th>
<th>More negotiable, but in some ways indirectly standardising texts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative texts that organise everyday life at the University. My participants are not necessarily reading these texts, but the organisational texts they do read or indirectly encounter through participation in courses or meetings at the university, can only be understood in reference to the intertextual complex they figure in.</td>
<td>These are the more specialised organisational texts directly referred to by my participants. Shaped by and in particular local settings of departments negotiated with the authoritative institutional texts. Tenure Track Evaluation criteria Development Discussion forms School and department level strategic decisions Journal ranking lists: e.g. FT 45 and Jukaisuforuumi University Rankings Accreditation/ RAE recommendations Gender/diversity regulations (e.g. parental leave; part-time contract possibilities)</td>
<td>Textually conveyed dialogues and activities. Such texts include indexical reference to institutional concepts, standpoints and ways-of-knowing which can only be identified and made sense of with knowledge of the institutional and organisational texts that have somehow become invisible in them e.g. Email correspondences about work Academic Values Disciplinary debates on academic quality and ideals AU websites, brochures, pictures and other artefacts that communicate certain messages Journal article manuscript reviewer and editor comments: which kind of structure, theory, method, philosophical position is encouraged CV writing and funding applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD recommendations EU Policies Finnish Higher Education reforms Finnish and EU gender and diversity rules and regulations</td>
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The social ontology of institutional ethnography defines the social as being always in a state of becoming. Aalto University was, and is, in the state of becoming, suffering from numerous “child deceases”, and this was often remarked on as a source of frustration. As a result authoritative texts were characterised by updates and revisions, requiring that I keep up to date with alterations, revisions and replacements relevant texts. I would ask when, how
and why a change in documents, procedures, strategies, eligibility criteria, evaluation models, and so on, would occur. I would consider whose interests do the texts and its institutional representation of reality serve. Find out to which extent my participants would pick up on these texts, the degree to which their experiences, practices and activities would become altered and organised as a result, and how this affected those whose standpoint I had taken.

4.7 Methods of analysis

As demonstrated above, I have not treated my participants as “vessels of factual information”. Their stories are not treated as ready-made but rather as organised within social and ruling relations - stories that are full of inconsistencies and contradictions. That are constructed in collaboration with me in my shifting position as researcher, colleague, subordinate, protégé, and friend (see e.g. Kitzinger 2004). That are shaped in social relations of gender, class, age, profession, organisational hierarchy. My purpose has not been to evaluate the extent to which my participants have interpreted the texts, rules and regulations in various documents, correctly, but instead to uncover how the texts are interpreted from a particular subject position within the social relations. My data has been produced and analysed as such.

I have analysed my material using complementary approaches: patterns/portrait-, discourse/language, and interview/fieldwork form analysis (Widerberg 2001). All of these I draw upon, to a lesser or greater degree, in my empirical analytical chapters.

Pattern analysis have been used to identify junior female academics as well as other groups. This utilises interview data, but also the EU, national and university statistics, I would attempt to decipher certain patterns of generalising effects of ruling relations and analytical threads of interest. I would read through the data, highlight and note down, in the paper margins and in notebooks, what I found interesting. For instance:

*What kind of workplace is this university, this school, this department – what does it mean to be an academic here? Who becomes a successful academic here?*

There appears to be an approximate agreement, across schools and departments, in terms of what constitutes academic work, but not necessarily agreement about how different tasks should be prioritised. Additionally, content and what counts as quality can be seen to differ. There exists a certain disjuncture between the definition of academic work being propagated and the actual work people do. Women tend to be more involved in and dedicated to teaching. However, the job also involves lots of administrative work, planning, travelling and emailing. The work seems characterised by hard work and long hours. While there is a certain freedom and flexibility to combine it with family and other interests (a modern workplace), this flexibility is experienced as being put under some pressure. Women hold vast majority of part-time positions. The
tenure track system and workplace favours men and women with no or few obligations beyond work.

How is inequality organised? Who does what kind of work, who is expected to do what kind of work, how are people recognised/not recognised for their efforts?
Younger and older academics have different expectations/notions, e.g. in terms of speaking English vs. Finnish or amount of time that should be spent abroad. Different social class backgrounds seem to influence the extent to which one takes for granted (or not) the ability to work independently. Economic position influences the need to take extra work in order to make ends meet, and as a result the time available to other work. Women and men seem to adopt somewhat different roles at the workplace. Single or two-parent households influence the time you have for own career. Degree of solidarity with parenting differs to some extent across departments/schools. Heteronormative family organisation and women’s second shift in terms of children and household work. Despite this, inequality is often voiced as a “non-issue” back home, women tend to provide excuses for or cover up their husband’s lesser involvement. This is also true for their workplace, but to a lesser extent. Gender, class, language and generational issues are organised somewhat differently depending on discipline. Different degrees of dissatisfaction and ability to voice these, and different histories in terms of engaging with these issues and problematizing them (the theoretical and scholarly debates of the discipline also matter here).

There are similarities that span individuals, disciplines, departments and schools (etc.) resulting from generalising effects of ruling relations. Nonetheless the course of reading through the data also made me aware of the particularities and differences that simultaneously needed to be granted attention. People were positioned differently within the social and ruling relations, the sequences of action within academia - and they all had unique experiences. I had to uncover how a particular individual’s response and activities had been organised the way it had. I therefore decided that I – in order to capture the particularities, complexities and variations – would have to carry out portrait analysis on the basis of interviews. In my empirically analytical chapters the portrait analysis come through as those stories that provided me with a point of entry for the analysis of social and ruling relations. They helped me tell a story about the truth of the complexity of experience, providing insight about the complex and diverging effects of social and ruling relations. Portraits provide descriptions of a particular person's life and situation. But portraits are never only descriptive. While striving to maintain and produce their standpoints and reduce objectification in the portraits, these are never fully representational. They serve as analytical representations; choices are necessarily made, certain elements of their story are highlighted and others downplayed, shaped by the particular research interests. Such are the ruling relations of research. However, in these cases it is not only about analytical concerns and choices, but also ethical ones. It is much more complicated to maintain the anonymity of my participants in the case of
portraits. For that reason I predominately attempted to offer descriptions that did not provide overtly revealing details. In cases such as the story of ‘Helen’, in Chapter 7, the most detailed portrait in this dissertation, after she had read, corrected and commented the interview transcription, I concurred that, in cases of additional uncertainty, I would contact her and make certain she felt comfortable with my choice. However, in her case, this did not become necessary.

After having achieved a certain overview of patterns and portraits I began manually organising the data according to themes related to my research interests and objective. My analysis was not theory driven, it did not start from theory, but started from the interviews’ stories of activities and experience. I was driven by a combined explorative empirically driven and narrative approach, while drawing on theories and concepts relevant to open up the data – what was and was not said – and organise the narrative. Drawing on the patterns and portraits, I looked at and organised the data in accordance with a number of themes: firstly, the type of work junior female scholars performed and how their evaluations of themselves and each other; secondly, the values and priorities they placed on different work activities and how these had become shaped by texts and other people; thirdly, how and to what extent gender had played an organising role; and finally, whose interest the work they carried out served, and what consequences this had for junior academics.

Working this way is, of course, an interchangeable engagement with the particularities of one individual’s experience and the complete story I wish to convey. In other words, an interchangeable engagement with the particularities of activities and experience and the social - and ruling relations that organise. Because I had been so deeply engaged in the field (being a member of the organisation myself) I was able to first write an overall empirically driven story and insert snippets from data that served as illustrations. Sometimes, subsequently, yet another look at the data, would reveal layers and aspects I had not noticed before, and the analysis would have to be modified/revised in order to take this into consideration. Telling the story and doing it in a manner that produces or “preserves” the standpoint – in all its diverging and inconsistent fragments and logic – involved several iterations. Writing is in itself an analytical rehearsal. When something fell outside the patterns I initially thought I had detected and the story I was trying to tell, I had to stop up and ask myself whether I was on the right track, what I had missed, and reflexively ask myself why. Part of this process was also feedback from and discussions with my participants; our conversations helped me grasp the complexity of their experiences better and therefore allowed me to develop better analysis.

Selecting and ordering my data was also an important first step in my discourse and text analysis: discovering and locating the social and ruling relations shaping the experiences and activities of people. Discourses and ideological codes are part of the social - and ruling relations.
In addition to drawing on and detecting discourses and codes in the organisational and institutional texts, I would also treat quotes, interviews and “on the spot” conversations from field notes and transcripts as text, and, furthermore, treat the accounts as organised within an interview genre. As Karin Widerberg (2001) highlights, the fact that both researcher and participants know that the conversation occurs within a research frame, produces assumptions about what can be asked and not asked, said and not said. These assumptions can be assumed to influence the story or details being revealed and what experiences of changing academia they divulge. It is likely that the story conveyed differs from what it might have been or sounded like in another framing and context. Indeed, having become friends with some of my participants, means that I, with considerable certainty can say that it does make a difference whether people consider it a “formal” interview or more of an exchange based friendly conversation. Despite knowing that it was an interview for research purposes, our relationship would sometimes mean that they would reveal feelings, thoughts and experiences they might not otherwise have (of course this is counter-factual; I cannot know that for certain). Regardless, however, the interview is a genre that organises speech and conversation in a particular way.

There are many forms of discourse analysis, and frequently meanings and levels of discourse analysis are confused (see e.g. Alvesson & Kärreman 2000). These may involve the analysis of how social relationships are negotiated in everyday conversations: rituals and codes of conduct within a particular local setting. It might focus of how identity, subjectivities and practices are discursively constructed, negotiated and organised in texts, media or literature. Sometimes the focus may be on how discourses and ideologies work to (re)produce relations of power and domination between people, groups, localities or otherwise (see e.g. Jaworski & Coupland 1999). At times it involves aspects of each - as it does in my case where I look at the local as well as translocally operating and organising discourses. The point of departure for all discourse analysis is that people speak through discourses and codes: their talk is socially organised. A given discourse hides certain embodied experiences while highlighting others, and the normative and/or truth claims embedded in the discourse serves the interests of particular people and reproduces relations of inequality. Discourses and ideological codes are part of the ruling relations and analysing them constitutes an important part in understanding the relational and material dynamics of power and ruling. In order to devise a productive discourse analysis the context of the interview, the interview genre and the researcher-participant position within the social relations were considered. People make sense of the world, organise their self-presentation and presentation of others by drawing on codes and discourses. They structure, legitimise, rationalise, prioritise, argue, constitute themselves relationally by drawing on discourses. The discourses may overlap and complement each other, but they may also be inconsistent. What is actually being said is not always in the text; and a given discourse does not always speak a particular actual experience. In order to understand what is being said
and how it is being said, what is not being said – that is, what the discourses and codes include and exclude – I engaged in locating discourses and ideological codes that organise the activities and accounts of my participants.

Of course there are always multiple discourses evident in such texts; it is impossible to pay equal attention to them all. Therefore, I decided to focus on the discourses central to the theme of my research: the gendered social relations of “ideal academic” in changing academia from the standpoint of junior female academics. The discourse analysis took place on two levels. Firstly, at a more detailed and empirically driven level in terms of how discourse and ideological codes enter into and shape particular experiences and activities. Secondly, on a meta-, and more theoretically driven, level focusing on how the specialised discourses where coordinated by ideological codes and metadiscourses. The choice of texts as well as extracts from interviews and field notes have been analytically motivated. The choice has been based on the actual doings and sayings of my participants, direct or indirect references to material texts that carry and mediate certain discourses and codes. Texts are only relevant insofar as I can or prove that they have actually been used and activated. This also involves careful attention to the diverging ways in which one discourse comes together with that of others in the account of a particular individual. Following this, I could hook the specialised text into a complex of discourses, codes and logics, not necessarily directly referred to or known by the participant. For my analytical purposes my focus was on discourses of masculinity and femininity, heteronormative discourses, internationalisation/inevitable globalisation rhetoric and discourses, progressive/modernity discourses, social democratic/equality discourses, excellence discourse(s), individualist and competitive discourses, global capitalism and neoliberal meta-discourses. However, other discourses of affect love, passion and care also play a role, as will become apparent in my empirical analytical chapters. More specifically I would attempt to discern how a participant constituted and recognised themselves as a legitimate or none-legitimate user of a given ideological code. Indeed, how the activation of the discourse (e.g. the excellence discourse) was part of gaining access to the ideological code, and how these were organised along lines of gendered, disciplinary and other social relations. I would also note how he or she would draw on alternative ways of knowing and somehow resist ruling ways of knowing. Finally, I paid reflexive analytical attention to how my subject presence(s) in the field proved a catalyst for particular discourses in the conversation/interviews.

4.8 Summary

I understand Institutional Ethnography to consist of four steps. Firstly, through participant observation/observant participation, my own experiences and early interviews, I identified the standpoint of junior female scholars, and this was to become my point of entry for discovering how the gendered social organisation of changing academia is put together. Secondly, I would uncover
cues to texts or other forms of coordination in interviews or everyday activities that would expedite my exploration of institutional orders and their influence on the everyday lives of people. This would allow me to clarify immediate local social relations and forms of coordination. Thirdly, I consider how such local social relations were negotiated, coordinated and shaped within larger textual complexes, translocal sequences of actions and held accountable to objectified relations that would (re)produce or strengthen local social inequalities. This would be performed by mapping out the intertextual complex and by speaking to differently located people within academia, such as professors, managers, administrative personnel. Fourthly, I would make sure to continuously return to, be reflexive of and evaluate how well I had managed to produce the standpoint of junior female academics in the process of research. Indeed, while Institutional Ethnography seeks to challenge the ruling relations of research, by doing research with and for people and taking an explicit political standpoint, it does not try to overthrow such relations. Ultimately it is still myself, the researcher, who makes decisions as to the exact focus of data production and analysis.

In my analysis I draw on pattern analysis in order to identify similarities between people as they are organised within social and ruling relations. Through the use of interview data, and also EU, national and university statistics, I would attempt to uncover certain patterns and analytical threads of potential interest. However, in order to uncover the particularities, complexities and variations in the ways that people picked up and activated ruling and social relations I also conducted a portrait analysis of interviews. I did not perform this for all my participants, but only those whose stories provided a particularly fruitful entry point for the analysis of social and ruling relations. On the basis of pattern and portrait analysis I could, therefore, organise my data.

In both my observations and interviews I looked for textual cues to help reveal and highlight the social and ruling relations shaping the experiences and activities of people. Discourses and ideological codes are part of the social - and ruling relations, and certainly discourse/language analysis - constitute a significant proportion of my analysis. The point of departure for discourse/language analysis is that people speak through discourses and codes: their talk is socially organised. People understand the world, organise their self-presentation and presentation of others by drawing on codes and discourses. In order to ensure a productive discourse analysis I had to take into consideration the context of the interview, the interview as genre, and the researcher-participant position within the social relations.
5. The ‘ideal academic’: the work of becoming excellent

Tenure track evaluation criteria are based on the principles of predictability, transparency, and comparability with international standards. (Careers at Aalto, Aalto University Website)

In this chapter I document how my discovery of an ideological code, “the ideal academic”, embedded in a new tenure track career and competence evaluation system, has helped me in exploring the social organisation of junior female academics’ lives. I demonstrate how the ideological code is a product of particular social and historical processes. How it, despite supposed neutrality, functions as a gendered social organiser, including some experiences and people, while excluding others. I evidence how people themselves are actively producing, reproducing and changing the very social and ruling relations that organise them. The focus is not on the activity of evaluating a candidate for a position per se, but rather on how the tenure track system, and the notion of the ‘ideal academic’ embedded in it, is holding people within as well as outside the system accountable to a specific measurable and comparable notion of quality and excellence.

5.1 The making of a new University

Over the past two decades a number of higher educational reforms have been carried out in Finland, provoking a gradual shift in the focus, function and internal governance of higher educational institutions. Currently, these institutions, precipitated by OECD policy recommendations, play a central role in producing knowledge and innovation to further Finland’s competitive position globally, and annually substantiate their international comparative standing through participation in increasingly standardised performance measures. A key element in the most recent reforms (2009/2010) was the granting of legal and financial autonomy to universities – either as public corporations or as foundations under private law with their own profit and loss

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28 This chapter can be found in Norwegian in a similar but not identical form in the book: Widerberg, Karin (ed.) (2015) I hjertet av velferdsstaten: En invitasjon til institusjonell etnografi. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk. The chapter is named: “‘Idealakademikeren’ og kvinnelige akademikeres hverdag”. 
accounts – combined with a shift in the management and decision-making structures of the universities. The objective was to create a foundation for universities to be more international and entrepreneurial, to improve their ability to compete in terms of obtaining international research funding and diversifying their funding base. The universities would continue receiving basic funding from the state, but this would be allocated primarily (75%) on the basis of indicators of “quality, effectiveness and extent” with a smaller portion (25%) due to scientific and educational policy priorities (Kuoppala & Näppilä 2012).

A central feature in the reforms were the three major mergers carried out in Turku, Kuopio and Helsinki. The flagship project was the amalgamation of three old Helsinki based universities: the Helsinki University of Arts, Helsinki University of Technology and Sciences and Helsinki School of Economics. The new foundation-based institution was named Aalto University. The merger was to create the basis for a Finnish “world-class” university, operationalised as featuring on the QS and/or UK Times Higher Education top 100 ranking list, by 2020.

Through a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), named “Striving for Excellence”, conducted and concluded in 2009 — just before the actual merger took place in January 2010 – the cornerstones of the Aalto University strategy were forged (Aalto University, 2009). RAE measured the performance and “research outputs” of staff and units – measured in terms of publication data, bibliometric data from ISI and Scopus databases and other research results — assessed by nine panels consisting of experts from 20 countries. The main conclusion drawn from the RAE was that all units had remarkable Societal Impact, but that this did “not correlate with the strongest scientific impact and scientific quality”. Units were advised to reduce the quantity of short-term research projects as these did not result in high quality/high impact articles. It was also suggested that they should implement more research leadership. Moreover, they should prioritise the recruitment of people with higher ambitions in terms of research impact and with more international experience. The decision to employ a competitive US style Tenure Track System was seen as central in achieving these goals (e.g. Herbert & Tienari 2013).

In US the tenure track system is explicitly competitive: academics enter and progress on the basis comparable and competitive evaluation and performance criteria. The primary focus is on international top-journal publications and teaching portfolios. A competitive evaluation takes place every few years, and, based on the outlined criteria, the best performing candidate progresses, ultimately being rewarded with a tenured professorship.

On Aalto University’s internal as well as external webpages the tenure track system is presented as a linear model that only allows a linear progression in the academic hierarchy.
The tenure track system criteria of evaluation has been implemented with the purpose of finding the *best* candidates for the job. The criteria include research and/or artistic work, teaching, activity in scientific community and academic leadership. The understanding of *what* counts as top quality and what is *most* important, can, however, only be revealed through engaging in indexical and inter-textual reading—by drawing on other texts and additional knowledge of how things transpire. Recruitment to, as well as progress within, the tenure track system occurs through “systematic evaluation” on the basis of principles of “predictability, transparency and comparability with international standards”.

With the exception of a few invitations to people who are, in the words of one academic manager, “*without any doubt competent*”, and those who already hold permanent professorships, the recruitments for tenure track openings have been carried out on the basis of open calls. However, the implementation of the system and the recruitment processes have been slower than expected. It was initially suggested that the short-term teaching or researcher contracts would be phased out within a couple of years and replaced entirely by tenure track and a so-called lecturer track. However, the continued reliance on project funding, as well as the necessity of being able to provide courses, has led many departments to extend already existing, or devise new, fixed term teaching or project researcher contracts.

The criteria of excellence outlined for the tenure track system has affected the whole university and faculty at all levels, both within the system and externally. The PhD system has been restructured. Lecturer track recruitments must also be based on the evaluation of a publication portfolio. Each PhD student and member of the faculty is evaluated and receives advice as to how to adjust their practices and priorities in accordance with the criteria defined in the tenure track system.

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29 Taken from the Aalto University website, Careers.
5.2 The textual representation of academic work and everyday actualities: a disjuncture

Maija (pseudonym) is a white middle-class Finnish woman with a husband and two children. She completed her doctoral studies a couple of years ago and was, at the time of the interview, working as a lecturer. Her experience conveys the disjuncture from which I investigate the social organisation of junior academics’ everyday lives.

She is very upset about having to ask some students to leave an overbooked course (room for 15, but 19 had signed up) and seems tense. She throws her pen against the wall, leaves it lying on the floor. Her facial expression, her trembling mouth, tells me that she is on the verge of tears. She contains herself and holds them back. We walk together to the kitchen area to boil water for tea. When the tea is ready we sit down together and she tells me about her day and how she had met the Dean for a career development talk, named development talks at Aalto. He is currently meeting and speaking to all faculty members about their personal career aspirations and how they can contribute to making Aalto world class by 2020. When she had booked the meeting she had (as required) sent her CV to him. She tells me about her experience. He starts – on the basis of her CV – to give her advice: that she must write in English – which, as she puts it, “if he had bothered to ask, I already do” – and she must publish in international top journals. He had commented on the fact that she had no such publications. She said that she only graduated as a PhD a few years ago and had been teaching a lot ever since. She had wanted to publish something in a top journal based on her PhD studies, but had simply not had the time because of teaching duties, and on top of this also had children to attend to at home. He had commented that in international top ranking universities it was normal that professors would teach six courses a year and at the same time publish in top journals. She had replied to him that professors may be listed formally as providing and teaching a course, but in reality they would have others, lower ranking (positioning herself as one of those), teaching for them which would be the only reason why they could be listed as doing both. Furthermore, she pointed out that her interest in doing ethnography severely limited the number of top journals available to publish in on a particular international ranking list (the list of publications that one has to have published in, in order to be eligible for a tenure track position at her school). He asked her what her future ambitions were – she answered that she would like to do ethnographic research and was not interested in the tenure track. He replied to her that within the next two years there would be no researcher or teacher positions left – everything would be on the Professor or Lecturer tracks. That is, he did not in fact provide any reply to what she was saying. She interpreted his reply as meaning that if she didn’t want to live up to the defined criteria of excellence formulated in the strategy she could not stay.

The experienced disjuncture between what type of work activities gain textual representation, such as publishing in particular international ranking listed journals, and the actual work carried out on a everyday/everynight basis. The
latter includes teaching, taking classes for professors when they are overburdened, communicating with students, handling administrative problems, conducting meaningful research, writing for publications and taking care of her children. It also includes the frustrating and emotionally challenging knowledge that it is hard, if not impossible, to do it all, and the work it takes to attempt at striking a balance is given little regard. While Maija’s experience is unique, the disjuncture within it replicated the experience of the majority of junior female academics interviewed during my doctoral thesis work. They find teaching rewarding and sometimes necessary in order to manage financially, they care about their students, are happy to assist professors in teaching and administrative work even when they themselves are under time-pressure. They often perform research that is underrepresented in the journals applicable to the international journal ranking lists, and they often (but not always) have spousal or parental duties. What they “should” do would often be at odds with what they “want” to do, and a great deal of work goes into attempting to achieve a balance.

What does Maija’s experience reveal about the ruling relations that shape her unsuccessful attempts at striking a balance? How is she held accountable to these, how does she participate in them and whose interests do they serve?

5.3 Enter the ‘ideal academic’

In order to map out how Maija’s experience became organised the way it did I will here utilise Smith’s notion of the ‘ideological code’ and Foucault’s concept of discourse as adapted by Smith as central, albeit different, elements in the ruling relations. Smith, drawing upon Foucault, conceives discourses as text-mediated social relations that coordinate multiple particular and institutionally various local sites, as people read, write or speak them. These discourses organise the social; but are themselves socially organised. Micro-level specialised discourses are also embedded in complex, historically specific, larger scale professional, political and economic discourses that also change through shifts in ruling practices and institutional ordering. Ethnography of the text will show that texts differ; some will allow for more interpretation, negotiation and agency to resist than others at particular points in time. In contrast to discourses that we activate and produce ourselves, Smith suggests that ideologies are something we are made subject to:

...ideologies, concepts, theories and the like [...] insert their ordering capacities into specialized sites operating otherwise independently [...] [They] generate texts and constitute their internal organization; they regulate intertextuality and interpret texts at sites of reading. [...] Texts generated in different settings [...] are coordinated conceptually, producing an internally consistent picture of the world and providing the terms of [talk and decisions]. (Smith 2004, 157)
The concept that Smith terms ‘ideological codes’ operate in more universalising or standardising ways than discourses. They have the ability to “organize texts across discursive sites,concerting discourse focused on divergent topics and sites, often having divergent audiences, and variously hooked into [...] practice”. It is not a:

...determinate concept or idea, though it can be expressed as such. Nor is it a formula or a definite form of words. Rather it is a constant generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary in the writing of texts and the production of talk and for interpreting sentences, written or spoken, ordered by it (Smith 2004, 158-159).

Joan Acker’s (1990) analysis of work organisations in the context of a patriarchal and capitalist system how gender (race and class) inequality is reproduced though a disembodied, asexual, abstracted, textual construct of “the ideal worker” able to fully dedicate him/herself to the organisation. The “ideal worker” – here converted to the “ideal academic” - is an ideological code such as postulated by Smith.

The texts in and around the tenure track system come to organise which work and experience should be flagged and made visible and, implicitly, which should be downplayed from the textual and institutional translation of academic work. The organising effect of the text means anything defined as “defective” or “lacking” can be translated into an “objective” for action. It creates a movement of people who work to evaluate themselves and each other in accordance to the criteria and decide which activities to engage in. This process was exemplified through the career development talks that formed the basis for the experience related by Maija. It is, of course, somewhat unusual that her school’s Dean would take the time to both speak individually to one hundred faculty members and collectively to all faculty members with PowerPoint presentations. However, such talks take place annually across the different schools and departments between each faculty member and their superior. Each faculty member will receive an email with a form that with specifies the purpose of the conversation and suggests topics to be discussed during the development talk as well as preparatory questions. The questions in the form would include, but not be restricted to, stating academic accomplishments and levels of alignment with the university, school and department strategy.

The definition of academic work in the texts, activated in this context by the Dean and academics, are of a particular abstracted, asexual, non-gendered and disembodied form. Jobs, duties, hierarchies, strategies and purposes within capitalist work organisations are defined and structured textually and in a standardised manner. The underlying purpose in this is to ensure that they are quantifiable and comparable, thus creating an easier point of departure for managers to decide on compensation in terms of salary and promotion and/or
prove to internal and external stakeholders that they are able to detect problems and point to solutions (Knights & Morgan 1991; Townsley 1993).

Acker’s notion of the ideal worker becomes applicable to academia as capitalist, managerial, economic logics and discourses are expanded to include and organise higher educational institutions and academic work (Ciancanelli 2010). The core of the university strategy is an ongoing evaluation of performance and how people should work to achieve the organisational goals/institutional intentions — organising social consciousness around what counts as “world-class quality” and a “world-class academic”.

Some of the most important texts outlining the ideal academic are presented below, guiding the activities on all levels in the academic hierarchy.
SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD (each school has its own independent board):
BIANNUAL RESEARCH ASSESSMENTS EXERCISE (bibliometrics and publication data) of school, departments and units, focus: how well the school, departments and units are doing in terms of reaching strategic goals

REPORT WITH ADVICE: What should be done on school and dept. Level in order to accomplish goals

‘Strategy Engagement Process’

INDIRECT TEXT MEDIATION:
- Engage faculty; provide more information and space for qss sessions; power point presentations; official gatherings with speeches; deans coffee/glögi sessions
- Career support events hosted by hr, academic managers, foundation board members or representatives from publications houses
- Career development talks (between boss and faculty/staff member) and coaching services

DIRECT TEXT MEDIATION:
- Weekly news letters on latest changes, challenges, recruitments and decisions hard copy version of strategy
- Delivered directly to all with a pigeon whole

SAB/RAE report used by university to negotiate funding with Ministry

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE basic funding allocation: on the basis university performance: publication quality and efficiency, internationalization, diversification of funding etc.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC POLICY PRIORITIES

UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

SCHOOL STRATEGY

DEPARTMENT STRATEGY

TOP 100 OF TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION

INTERNATIONALIZE AND BECOME ‘WORLD CLASS’ BY 2020

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL: TENURE TRACK SYSTEM AND IT’S EVALUATION CRITERIA

QS UNIVERSITY RANKING LIST

RESEARCH/PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL TOP JOURNALS AND BIBLIOMETRICS

TEACHING

ACTIVITY IN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY/ SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP

JOURNAL RANKING LISTS:

DEPARTMENT/DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE CALL FOR APPLICATIONS/EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS

Submit shortlist

DEPARTMENT/ DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE CALL FOR APPLICATIONS/EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS

SCHOOL COMMITTEE (INCLUDES VICE DEAN, ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH DISCIPLINE AND TWO FROM UNIVERSITY HR) EVALUATE SHORTLIST

Submit final recommendation

Dean or committee call for new short-list

RECTOR OR COMMITTEE CAN DEMAND RE-EVALUATION

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE: FINAL DECISION

Process of Tenure track Evaluation: Matrix structure
In one of the first pages of the *Introduction to the Aalto University Strategy*, distributed to all staff and faculty members in hard-copy pocket format, it notes, as if speaking to a generalised and disembodied crowd: “Without the people of Aalto, there is no Aalto. We all have our role in writing the next chapter of Aalto’s success story” (Introduction to Aalto Strategy 2012, p. 3). These calls for the abstract and disembodied ideal academic are repeated in various places. At one HR career information event attended by PhD candidates and faculty members it was stated: *Everyone* can enter the tenure track as long as they: “Don't give up! Work hard! Write good papers! Find money and students! Learn to teach! [Remain] active in the scientific community, in Society and at the University!” The virtual realities of such texts and representations resonate with the ‘images’ people would paint when asked to describe the type of academic the University was looking for, and how evaluate themselves in relation to it.

**Rebecca:** ...what do you think is the ideal Aalto academic?  
**Liisa:** that’s a good question...they’ve definitely done a pretty good job constructing that idea of, with the practices that they’re introducing and *the way they describe it*... but the ideal Aalto academic is someone who’s very active, first of all, you have to be good in, in *all the areas* of academic work in the sense that both the research and teaching, and, and then probably some... if not consulting, but you know this, all this other, sort of the third task of universities, of also dealing with the rest of the world in a way.. Teaching is sort of, they say that you know, “this is something that we need to work on” and "we have to have really world class pedagogical systems’’ or whatever, but research is what, what counts, and what you’re supposed to do is you have to publish a lot in good, good journals of course. And, uh... mostly work with international colleagues, you know, anything to do with Finland or whatever doesn’t count, so you should write in English. And it is necessary to network with various, important, big name universities, probably so that it, you know, looks good and looks like you’re doing world, world class research. And it also seems that just being international, you know, that... that it's not Finnish people in a way that they want... now when they announced some of these new jobs, I paid attention to the fact that they’re so proud if most of the applicants are from abroad. And the assumption is that because they're from abroad they must be better than anybody here. In a way. So the international aspect is certainly there. And, what else. I mean, you have to be really devoted and, and... I mean, if you think about it, all the things that are sort of expected... then you do really have to give it, your all to the...to the career... and also in the sense that I think that, that you will have to, if, in order for you to be able to do this, you do have to sort of understand the game and make extra efforts all the time. Because if I think

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30 One academic manager told me how teaching and other activities would not be taken into consideration unless the candidate first and foremost had the right amount of publications in the right places. “If a person has 2 or 3 publications in [that particular ranking] list there need not be much discussion about whether the person is at the right level… but then if there isn’t that then we need to look at achievements of the person in other ways... we do of course make a holistic evaluation of the person anyway… but its hard to have a person tenured without any clear evidence of research excellence”. When asked whether it had ever been possible to recruit someone without publications in journals occurring on that particular list, she replied “no”.

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about it, I can easily immerse myself in some of this work, and, and network with people. But, but just purely because I really want to meet those people and learn about new things and whatever, but this system emphasises these outside things so much that I can see that people go, start doing this more kind of instrumental type of networking, and, and certain activities, they're just like... you know, that are not necessarily connected to the, just the joy of doing the research. You know. I'm, I'm not sure if that would happen, but it just seems that the requirements are quite, quite high.

Rebecca: Mm. Do you feel like this construction that you've [just described], the construction you feel that they have made on the Aalto side...do you feel you can live up to that? Do you feel it's realistic for you?

Liisa: [sighs]

As with Maija, ‘Liisa’ experienced challenges negotiating between what was important and meaningful to her – writing her monograph, researching, reading, learning, developing the curriculum, Master’s programs and engaging in teaching – while simultaneously playing the linear instrumental game, described in the strategy and related texts. A strategy that would secure her future position through means of publishing in the right journals, working with the right people, being internationally minded and so forth. On top of this, her time spent working outside academia before embarking on her PhD, her years on maternity leave and the wish to spend time with her family were also related as causes for concern. She worried that she was too old or not considered dedicated enough to be taken into consideration for post doc funding or the tenure track.

Liisa: people of my age, if they get their PhD, you know they've already said that, well, you know, like, post-doc funding is not given because, you know, you're sort of late starting, and getting into the professor track...

Her story, not dissimilar to that of many other junior female academics, compelled me to try to clarify the overall picture regarding division of labour in terms of parental leave and work focus in academia and whether any overarching gender patterns could be detected.

5.4 Categories: the effects of ruling relations

The most common method for HR management teams in academic organisations to comprehend gender and diversity is to categorise and produce statistical breakdowns by faculty, thereby creating an overview of gender, nationality, age, etc. According to such figures, women at Aalto University, enabled by Finnish law and welfare policies, comprise the vast majority, 83%, of all child-care and parental leave (Aalto HR 2012). While there has been a positive development nationally in the last 15 years, with progressive fatherhood inducements and more men taking parental leave, this change has been remarkably slow. The periods taken off from work by fathers have been
significantly shorter in comparison to mothers and have recently been declining (Haataja 2009; Hausmann et al 2011). Moreover, women at Aalto University are much more likely to be employed on part-time contracts than men, and this group of part-time employees is also generally below the age of 40 (Aalto HR 2012). Women, on average, also receive lower salaries and less funding than men at AU, a fact that may be due to fewer women being in the highest income group: the professors (Aalto HR 2012). Across Europe women generally have a more difficult time obtaining competitive research grants compared to their male counterparts. This has been explained by the fact that scientific boards and grant awarding bodies are dominated by men. However, such an explanation does not hold for Finland, since 47% of the board members here are women (Mapping the Maze 2008, 20). The Aalto University statistics do not provide any breakdowns by gender on teaching and research, however, EU statistics show that women (in Finland as well as other countries) are more likely to be involved in teaching than men and have larger teaching loads than men (She Figures 2009).

Out of 85 tenure track appointments made at Aalto University in 2010-2011 (Aalto HR 2012), 18% of the applications received were from women, and 16% of the appointments were of women (Aalto HR 2012). While the share of Finnish female PhD graduates in 2006 stood at 47% (She Figures 2009) the proportion of women decreases significantly at the upper echelons of the academic hierarchy. This phenomenon has been named “the academic scissor” (Mapping the Maze 2008). Women held 23% of Professorships in Finland in 2007 (ibid), though the proportion of women holding junior positions was higher the proportion holding professorships. The statistics show an increase in the percentage of women pursuing an academic career over the last ten years, but their positive progress is slow.

These statistical breakdowns provide an important insight into the effects or symptoms of gendered cultural, societal and organisational life and ruling relations (e.g. Wahl 1992; Wahl 2013a). However “categories are not enough” (Smith 2009). In order to understand how these occur and are produced through the daily activities of people, I must engage in analysis that goes beyond categories. This must be undertaken to gain an understanding of how the doing of gender becomes an essential part of the everyday work for achieving ruling purposes/institutional intentions related to the production of ‘ideal academics’.

5.5 Beyond categories: doing excellence, doing gender

Through the experiences of my research participants it has been observed how certain academic work activities gain visibility. These are the activities that gain representation in the documents and strategic texts that describe what kind of work is considered significant and expected in Aalto University. While certain activities are foregrounded, others are downplayed.

The kind of work that counts are those Liisa describes as streamlined, instrumental and ‘game-like’ networking, publishing and careering. This does
not mean that you cannot, in principle, undertake work that does not count or
does not gain textual representation, but it demands a lot of navigation. Those
who are successful are usually those who dedicate their lives to their career.
This is something the statistical breakdowns suggest that many female
academics below the age of forty are generally not in a position to do. Not only
do they take the vast majority of parental leave, they also occupy the majority
of part-time positions, they deliver the majority of teaching and teaching
preparation hours, and only a few of them apply for and reach the top
academic positions. These issues were mentioned in many of my conversations
with junior female scholars, but perhaps more clearly in one of my interviews
with my friend and colleague, Liisa. Without me asking explicitly, she brought up
“gender” in connection to the topic and content of a seminar that had been
arranged by some other junior female academics:

Liisa: I actually thought about it this weekend… the whole thing had to do with
gender. It had a lot to do with gender. I mean the women who organised the
whole thing started out in this very powerful way. They had written this
narrative about their own experiences and how they have been trying to deal
with the demands that are placed upon them ...and the time they have available.
I noticed that I can really relate to them a lot, because they have the same
issues that I have had ...basically the whole time. They have children and they
just have a certain number of hours per day they can devote to this work and
then comes all this measurement stuff. You know they are expected to produce
...it’s not only the courses they have to take but then there is more and more
pressure on them to produce publications and conference papers and that sort
of thing ...and I think I was able to bring into the discussion that you know how
I can clearly see the change that has happened.

Seminars, such as the one referred to above, played, for a certain period of
time, an important role for discussing the challenges and problems in
connection to the organisational changes. Liisa, being my friend and a key
informant in my study, someone whom I spoke to a lot to over the years, may
have been able to name what was occurring as gendered for a number of
reasons: firstly, because she herself is a feminist and interested in gender in
her own academic work; and secondly, because she is of course familiar with
my work and therefore perhaps comfortable about speaking openly about her
perspectives. In her account of what she means by “gendered”, it is clear that
she, unknowingly and despite her otherwise very reflexive and critical
engagement with these issues, is quite emotional. She is reproducing the
taken-for-granted expectation that women are the ones taking the main
responsibility for finding an appropriate balance of work and family. However,
her thoughts about what was transpiring, and of finding that she shares
experiences with other junior female scholars constitute an approach by which
start to problematize the claimed objectivity and neutrality of ideal academic,
including the very organisational processes and intentions related to the
activation of the ideal and the excellence discourse. I could therefore begin looking at these as gendered (see e.g. Acker 1990).

In the Western world Liberal feminist ideas have become mainstream and also widely-embraced by capitalist organisations as benefitting capital. This includes, for instance, the notion that women can and should be allowed to participate and compete on the job market on an equal footing (see e.g. Eisenstein 2009). In Finland liberal gender equality, the long history of female participation in the public sphere and the high representation of women on the labour market, is part of the national self-understanding. (See e.g. Marakowitz 1996). State feminism in the form of individualist dual-earner family supporting welfare policies, the Finnish ‘Act for Equality between Men and Women’, combined with the ratification of EU anti-discrimination acts, have, despite implementation problems (Holli & Kantola 2007), contributed to the institutionalisation of liberal gender equality. Equally, an outspoken or overtly paternalistic or authoritarian masculinity is not considered comme il faut in contemporary Finland. Perhaps this is particularly so in the context of academia where a relatively progressive self-understanding is evident. The merit-based evaluation promoted by several high standing people within the university as being fair and neutral and as overriding the problems of the previous system, can be seen as forming a part of this. It is often acknowledged by academic managers that the previous recruitment system was gendered and systematically favoured white, upper/middle-class, men. Against this so-called old fashioned and irrational recruitment system the tenure track and its clearly defined evaluation criteria are considered more in alignment with a progressive self-understanding rendering explicit gender discrimination irrational, unenlightened and unacceptable (Holgersson 2012). Gender equality and egalitarianism is treated as a taken-for-granted “Finnish Value” and has been called upon by Scientific Advisory Boards (SAB) as well as by the university management as a possible competitive advantage that the schools and university should highlight in its self-branding.

In March 2012, a Friday emailed newsletter received by all staff members at the Aalto school of Economics, had attached the report and also summarised the main points of the evaluation and recommendations. These included: a need for rebranding the school by changing its name, with the purposes of “increasing international visibility”. Further, it was suggested to consider strategic use of “Finnish values, such as egalitarianism” and the forging of a “unique Finnish identity” in branding; although it was suggested to be cautious about the tensions that may be implied between the brand and reality when it comes to attract top faculty from abroad and using pay differentials as a means.

Gaining eligibility to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to Aalto University’s ‘ideal academic’ is central for furthering both the university’s international aspirations and Finland’s global competitive position, but requires, nonetheless, doing a particular form of masculinity. Going
through the evaluation criteria and profiles constructed of employees considered Aalto’s public face, I find that they portray a certain masculine discourse. This is strikingly similar to the masculinity discourses dominating contemporary transnational corporate management and business elite connected with neoliberal agendas of globalisation (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 849). This is perhaps due to universities increasing international orientation, engagement in market-like competitive behaviour and internal governance forms adapting HR and strategic management forms known from the corporate world, not entirely surprising (Kuoppala & Näpplä 2012; Parker & Weick 2013; Connell 1998; Connell 2005; Willmott 1995).

In order to document the textually mediated discourses of masculinity, activated or referred to by my participants, I have analysed texts related to the tenure track evaluation criteria. These have further revealed an intertextual hierarchy informing the ways in which people (standing within as well as outside the tenure track system), units, departments, schools and the University as a whole are measured in terms of reaching the 2020 goal.

The texts are standardised - not in the sense that they ignore differences among formally, and textually vested, categorised schools or departments, but that they are largely indifferent to differences within those schools or departments, differences that seldom gain representation in institutional documents. Departments and schools have been restructured several times since 2010 with the purpose of making such standardisations more actionable. The texts become a point of reference across different settings for people in different social, economic and life circumstances. The complexity of everyday life, human relations and interaction become mediated and organised by the texts, seemingly able to:

...speak in the absence of speakers; meaning is detached from local contexts of interpretation; the same meaning can occur simultaneously in a multiplicity of socially and temporally disjoined settings" (Smith 1990b, 175).

The normativity of the ideal academic is not so much expressed in the textually mediated discourses, as it is a normative organisation that becomes accomplished and re-accomplished through it. The texts organise the social in a way that leads to the demarcation of certain aspects of academic work as important, and the deprioritising of others, making them invisible in the textual representations of work (which is what is considered when evaluating the performance of people, units and departments). In the process of this foregrounding, and A-classifying, certain types of workers, and relegating, B-classifying, other workers. The textually mediated discourses “supply codes [and] procedures for reading of the locally produced [...] presentation of self in everyday life” (Smith 1990b, 176; Goffman 1959); hence providing the codes and procedures for evaluating oneself and others eligible for enacting the excellence discourse.
Texts and images in and around the tenure track system mediate global masculinity discourses that are differing yet also entwined. These include masculinities of geocentrism, careerism, and informalism. The masculinity of geocentrism involves international or global orientation in one’s choice of work and work place. The masculinity of careerism involves commitment to organisational goals, to the extent that it may well lead to sacrificing one’s private or personal commitments (because this kind of commitment to work is based on the assumption that people have no commitments beyond work). Careerism also involves focusing on particular types of tasks, necessarily involving the classification of some tasks as being of less importance than others for furthering one’s career. The masculinity of informalism involves homosocial bonding and networking between excellent and equally geocentrically minded men and women across the globe. These global masculinity discourses are connected to the rhetoric of inevitable participation in global capitalism (see Connell 1998; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Tienari & Koveshnikov 2012).

Related to the geocentric and narrow ‘ideal academic’ is the naturalisation of English as the language of publication and internal communication in Finnish higher education following the recent reforms, and perhaps particularly at Aalto University (Saarinen 2012). Internal communication, teaching and writing in English is part of the internationalisation strategy. The vast majority of journals appearing in the journal ranking lists that count in evaluations for tenure track only publish in English31. Rather paradoxically, this strategy equates ‘international/foreign languages’ with ‘English’ and furthermore assumes that all people within the organisation to be equally well positioned in terms of mastering the English language (Saarinen 2012). The position may very well disadvantage certain types of research that require sensitivity to linguistic particularities. Furthermore, it speaks from an invisible standpoint which favours a generation who were educated after English became institutionalised and more systematically promoted at all levels of education, and within all fields of research, in Finland. Indeed, despite the fact that age-based discrimination is illegal, the textual requirements mean that the ideal academic tends to be a relatively young. Although the creation of a strong international environment is part of the strategy, it is a particular kind of international, involving people who speak and write fluently in English, and who are educated to make their work publishable in the appropriate journals.

In the texts, documents, brochures, websites, PowerPoint presentations and talks at the university and in the media, these young masculinity discourses operate in subtle ways. They are not openly named masculine. The texts, and the stories they tell, make certain activities and work visible, while downplaying or silencing others, in a manner that is based on treating masculine ways of knowing as taken-for-granted, naturalised and unproblematic. One example was an image of a young white serious looking male who was recruited for a tenure track position in one of the schools of technology and science. Below the image there was a question, in English,
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possed as if asked by him: “Are you on the right track?” We have no way of knowing whether it was in fact him who asked this question; what conversation, if any, formed the basis of the quote, if it was indeed a quote; and, if it was a quote, what type of questions had led him to respond with that question. The selection procedures, activated by the nameless and faceless person who engaged in the work of constructing the text and image, are hidden. However, when I, and my colleagues, see the image and read the text connected to it, we make sense of it by activating the ideological code and the discourses connected to it. We all know how to read, interpret and answer “Are you on the right track?” This image and text were distributed in two formats: on the front page of a hard copy brochure, that if opened contained additional information about the tenure track system and criteria of evaluation, and on the internal websites where a link to this tenure tracked CV could be found. The question as to whether you are on the right track implies that there is a wrong track and that it is possible to get derailed. Knowing what counts as the right track is that which is indicated as important in the institutionalised tenure track evaluation criteria and made concrete and actionable in the CV. That which does not gain textual representation there is not of importance, and not being there is being on the wrong track.

Plenty of discursive ‘images’, can assist in deciphering what being on the right track and making actionable the ideal academic means, as is evident on the university websites and reproduced at official gatherings and events. The university websites ‘Meet our Faculty’ section is a good example. In spring 2014 six people received a face in the form of a picture and a short presentation. As readers and viewers we get a sense of who is appreciated as permanent and visiting faculty and academics, what type of work is foregrounded and which is downplayed. The presentation is a mixture of citations and narrative conveyed by an author who, once again, remains nameless and faceless. A visiting male professor from Iceland gets presented as “one of the leading economists in Iceland”, whose work and knowledge of the failed policies that led to the economic crisis is presented as beneficial for evaluating Finnish economic policies. The professor is cited for saying that “this has been an excellent community for doing research and I have also managed to do a lot of work”. A female tenure track professor from Finland, is presented differently, with no direct citations, by listing facts about her age, a prize received for her doctoral thesis, research interests, previous positions held, and the fact that she has published in more than “25 international peer-reviewed journals and books”. There is a link to a YouTube video of her installation lecture and a CV listing all of her publications. A Finnish male Professor who is “recognised for his persistent and distinguished work”, and “one of the leading scholars in the world” within his field, is cited expressing how Finland is a particularly good place to empirically study his area of focus, investor behaviour, but also claiming that the “majority of partners in my research work are in foreign universities, and I am almost in daily contact with them”. The anonymous and voiceless narrator then explains how travelling all over the world to give presentations and “international networking is
important for top-level research”. Because the competition in his field of study, and the required resources has accelerated over the years, it is central “in order to meet the publication threshold” that “a study [is] at least as innovative but more comprehensive and methodologically more accomplished than, for instance, ten years ago”. As readers, we are relieved, however, to learn that “despite its demands, he finds research work rewarding”. One female professor from China, who gained her doctoral education in USA, explains that the university’s Tenure Track System appealed to her because “it places sufficient value on high quality research.” In particular, she finds that not having to spend an unreasonable amount of time on administrative tasks gives her “the freedom to really concentrate on her own research.” Similarly, she is cited as saying that “this enables me to focus on the development of professional skills in the early stages of my career”. It is claimed that the system is not intended to encourage competition between faculty members, but only with oneself and the Chinese professor supports this, saying, “the evaluation is based on personal performance and outcome, which promotes collaboration and reduces competition between colleagues.” In addition to enjoying life in Finland, she also has future career aspirations: the new assistant professor expects flexibility in the implementation of teaching and research and enough support for conducting her own research. She also has one suggestion for how to improve things: “[she] hopes that [the] university would invest even more in internationalisation, and that the English-speaking staff would be more effectively accounted for as regards language used at the university. ’But I know that Aalto is getting there’, [she] adds confidently”.32

The heteronormative order and relational nature of gender means that ruling ways of knowing masculinity are always defined in “contradistinction” to subordinated masculinities and to some models of femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 848; Connell 1998; Connell 1987). In the same manner as doing a particular form of masculinity is subtly invoked for gaining eligibility to the excellence discourse and evaluating oneself, and others, as being, or not being, on the right track; doing femininity enters as organiser in the invisible work. To clarify, the work that does not gain textual representation but nonetheless is an assumed subtext to the ideal academic. The teaching, curriculum planning, student care, emotional work at the university and in the department, and the care duties in the home must also be performed. This is necessary in order for the institutional reality of the university strategy and ideal academic to become actionable. Some of this work is mentioned, but not problematized from a gender perspective, in some organisational texts (such as the SAB reports or committee reports on how to further improve teaching), and completely absent in others (such as the tenure track evaluation criteria).

The femininity discourses include a caring discourse that emphasises the importance of one’s family commitments, but also collegiality and emotional work in terms of providing encouragement, advice, comfort, support and help.

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...to solve tasks or ameliorating workload burdens. Furthermore, it involves ensuring that the learning experience of students paramount through expending considerable time and effort in preparing classes and delivering feedback.

Both men and women in this context can and do engage in activating these masculinities and femininities. What makes them masculine and feminine is that they are based on hidden binary categories and universalising heteronormative assumptions about gendered divisions of labour at home and at the university (e.g. Smith 1990b; Smith 2004). Indeed, certain stereotypes continue being reproduced in subtle and often unconscious ways, connecting certain practices and expectations to certain sex-categorized others and themselves (and myself – for I am certainly not free of participation in this practice, as becomes obvious in some of the questions I pose and the way I pose them in some of my interviews). The process of applying these is part of the movement involved in positioning oneself in relation to the ‘ideal academic’.

In my fieldwork I found evidence of how both men and women engage in doing masculinity and femininity and how it required a lot of balancing - particularly by women. One female professor from the male dominated field of technology and sciences divulged:

Maarit: ...I think that if I was quiet or more formal and um ...I think they [my male colleagues] expect me to behave like their wives would behave...but I am equal here ...so I mean why can’t I speak out when everybody else speaks out...but it’s harder ...and its funny it’s almost like going to their homes and I could imagine their wives ...they want to control women here the same way they control their wives ...maybe they have a very nice relationship but it’s like a role...we go back to no academic roles [...] I think my personality is a challenge here because I am very outspoken, I laugh a lot, I don’t take things dreadfully seriously...I speak out when I feel like speaking out sometimes maybe too fast ...um but I never insult anyone, I don’t want to argue with anyone ...that’s my personality this is the way I am um I think my gender has certainly NOT been an advantage because a woman who is outspoken is the worst thing in [a] community dominated by men um because you are a threat if you are a little bit too crazy and a woman [...] where it has been a disadvantage and where I can see it is in all of these committees that are sort of like ...right now the tenure track committee we have here there is not one single woman on those and the men there they don’t deliberately make this choice but because it is simply much easier for them [...] they don’t think about it they don’t even consult and say do you have the time because there aren’t that many women in the faculty so we don’t necessarily have the time but ...I am asked at the last moment I am always the one to say hey I think we should have women here I always have to remind them...and you know you get excluded they still have this good old boys network here and it works extremely well [...] it has always worked that way ...I think also we had this discussion about three years ago when we had this department head who’s a man and I had been the vice deputy head for three years and when we were going through this discussion I suggested that I could be the deputy because if we have a man ...who is very well qualified...who is the
head then I could you know because its fair...not because I am a woman but because we had the deal that one would be from [one discipline] and one would be from [another discipline] and we are equally qualified ...scientifically it makes no difference...and it was a major issue and I mean it’s not as if the deputy has a lot of influence it’s not like I am going to blow up the whole place by being too crazy um now we have the same thing...the department head has already been asked whether he will continue for the next three years ...but I have not been asked and I have a feeling that a younger male professor will be nominated as deputy head although I am twice or three times as qualified as he is...

‘Maarit’s’ story indicates firstly that she assumes, in accordance with the textual constructs, that organisations and (academic) work is a gender-neutral space: that she is “equal here”, an assumption that itself contributes to the ongoing reproduction of masculine advantage in this setting. Furthermore, her story exemplifies the idea of double bind (e.g. Gherardi & Poggio 2007). A woman in this community cannot be too feminine, because then she would not be taken seriously by her male or female colleagues: she has to be vocal, show her worth and highlight her qualifications. However, she cannot be too masculine, too informal or “crazy” in manners similar to her male colleagues, either because then she does not comply with the stereotypical gender expectations. Similarly, she immediately elaborates that, despite speaking up and laughing a lot, she does not try to “insult” or seek to “argue” with anyone. This desire for clarification would appear to rest on an assumption that I would draw the conclusion that she deliberately seeks conflict by not living up to the feminine stereotype referred to as the “non-academic role”. Stories such as Maarit’s could be validated by similar stories, at varying degrees, from other departments and schools. One male academic related how the young women in his department played a central role in creating a feeling of community by arranging coffee and cake sessions once a week and finding the time to discuss emotional issues and work-related stress. When they were not there, e.g. because of maternity leave or travel, faculty members tended to keep their doors shut in order to be able to focus on their own work, the sense of community and solidarity was, to his disappointment, lost. However, he did not himself try to precipitate such sessions, because he was too busy with his work.

Maarit’s experience of the gendered hierarchies and social relations within her department is also reproduced through homosocial rituals (e.g. Holgerson 2012). Indeed, various informal networks in and across the schools (e.g. basketball teams, hockey teams) exist through which older and more experienced men, higher positioned in the academic hierarchy, can pass on advice, culture and opportunities to younger less experienced men. While the younger men, and progressive elder men, may be critical of such practices – for indeed, if and when I asked, most men in this context would consider it unfair – it can be hard to object to them due to fear of exclusion and disadvantages. Such networks, in time come to normalise gender based
segregation and exclusionary practices. Women, such as Maarit, therefore should not object to, but rather silently accept and take part in reproducing them as unproblematic, natural and given. To paraphrase, that both men and women will find it hard to live up to the ideal academic, gendered stereotypical expectations and different access to informal networks make it harder for women than for men to build a CV that would render them eligible for tenure track.

There are other interviews where female professors had managed to do gender differently and with success. One woman reported to me how she and her husband had an “untraditional” division of labour at home, but also regarding their jobs. They had reversed the hetero-normative roles so that she was the travelling and career minded, and he more insular and home oriented. This fact was often, she explained, in representational situations related to her work, met with “awkward silences” which she interpreted as people disapproving. Of course, she could only interpret the awkward silences in that way and categorise her and her husband’s way of doing things as different because she is familiar with and able to read back from the institutional language of hetero-normative gendered divisions of labour to her own situation.

However, the division of labour is not only gendered and sexualised. I referred to this with my description of the narrow elitist masculinity that becomes a central part of doing the ‘ideal academic’, excluding not only most women but also most men. The tenure track texts convey explicit references that both paternal and maternal leave should be taken into consideration in evaluating a candidate. The texts are thus aligned with notions of progressive fatherhood. However, these measures when locally adopted are interpreted selectively in a manner that is, in some ways, reproducing gendered and classed social relations. My conversation with one academic manager, ‘Inga’, illustrates this:

**Rebecca:** ...how do you think you would best reach or create the foundation for equality...at least within recruitment for professorships?

**Inga:** Well um...I think the academic job is ideal for females in a way...because you can in many ways ...at least I...I mean I was extremely productive when I was at home with the children ...luckily they were both healthy and slept rather well ...but still I really enjoyed... I was three years at home with my son and then I had a research project and so on and then with our daughter I then had a part time research post ...but anyways in that sense that choice of a career path it should be a wonderful way of combining family with what you like ...research and teaching and the flexibility of schedules and so on...so in many ways I think its um attractive for women who want to have both and I think many of us want to have both ...rather than have to select ... on the other hand I have lots of my colleagues...there are lots of single women or women who don’t have children and eh I often find it ...I mean if you ask me personally ... I often find that I am struggling because I have the family and I still want to publish and I find that sort of...I am always lagging behind and they are so extremely efficient ...they might be better time managers but also they don’t have this sort of eh you know
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this constant balancing act and if they then have a husband who is a great chef...it makes life a little easier I think...so um I think I have always tried to create a flexible work environment in a sense that you can work from home and I think that our research environment as such encourages that...

Rebecca: Do you think the tenure track system encourages that?
Inga: No! No I don’t think so...but I must say I never thought of it from a gender perspective...as you put it now...so its eye-opening actually to see that...and as you pointed out with the age...where that decision and commitment [to your academic career] should be made is where you also make other important decisions in your life [e.g. family]...it’s something I should have thought of myself but I didn’t...

From this extract we get a sense of how questions of equality in this context are automatically connected to gender (see also Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013) and of the gendered expectations embedded in work-life balance and equality measures: it is expected that women are the ones who undertake child-care and housework. Equality measures are there to benefit women with children. Women with children are positioned as those who need to be enabled to strike a balance, and it is expected that most women would prefer to have both a family and a career. Single women (assumed not to have children), women without children, married men with children, or women with a husband who cooks, do not need such measures to the same extent. Academic work is seen as allowing freedom and flexibility for women to combine family and work. Inga, as an academic manager, explains how she has always encouraged women in her department to work from home if needed. Her own experience of working part-time in order to stay home with her children when they were young, is taken-for-granted as an option available to all women. Her position is based on a number of assumptions and a particular standpoint within the social relations that she is not fully aware of. Indeed, she speaks from a white, middle-class and hetero-normative standpoint: It is possible for her to stay home for three years and work part-time because she has a husband who has sufficient income to provide for them without her working full-time. It is founded on the assumption that women with children in academia are not single and that a woman’s independence in terms of structuring her work can be substituted with dependence upon her husband.

The standpoint is one that is also embedded in and for long has been reproduced through the Finnish welfare system, free public education and state feminism. The system, while having certainly created a foundation for social mobility and more equality, has also led to a downplaying of the question of class-related inequality within historically ‘middle-class’ work organisations such as academia. Class-based equality has largely been considered a mission accomplished as a result of such social mobility measures, leading to the reproduction of status quo in a number of ways and under current economic changes and political reforms perhaps a strengthening of such gendered and classed inequalities (see e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013). Initially Inga did not problematize the tenure track system and the related excellence standards, but rather, earlier on during our
conversation, indicated that she sees it as a fair and neutral system of evaluation, which leads to the recruitment of the *best* candidates. However, her earlier statements, when combined with her statements above, seem to suggest something different. The standardisation of criteria for excellence, competence and academic leadership may very well provide less space for the flexible work environment she hitherto has encouraged. In the attempt to be progressive and pro-gender equality, Inga reproduces the very basis of the current gender, sex and class order.

Many of the junior female academics, including the earlier quoted Liisa, would invoke the Finnish egalitarian and politically correct self-understanding – a self-understanding that is also mediated in the university texts related to using specifically *Finnish egalitarian values* to make work and life in Finland attractive to foreign applicants – that their male partners were equally involved in domestic duties. They would engage in the ‘feminine’ work of covering up and making invisible their own extra work on which the position and priorities of others depend but which does not gain textual representation. Interestingly, statements about how egalitarian they were at home or how equal the relation and division of labour between men and women in the department would often follow or precede (un-problematized) elaborations that signalled a rather non-egalitarian division of labour. It included elaboration on how most of the lecturers in the department were women and most professors were men. How they had very little time for research due to teaching obligations and meetings with students. That they – because of their partners’ business travels and less flexible work schedules – would arrive to work late because they had to take their children to day-care and leave work early in order to pick them up. Or, finally, if they were single parents or their partner had insufficient income, had to take extra teaching or administrative work. The widely activated politically correct discourse serves to regulate the experiences in a way that de-politicises and makes invisible the gendered, sexed and classed subtext of the ideal academic: “It operates to reaffirm the authority of the established and to discredit” alternative interpretations and critique (Smith 2004, 179).

Although there are many different discourses of femininity and masculinity at work here, a particular and increasingly narrow elitist masculinity must be activated, by men as well as women, in order to be eligible to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to the textually defined ideal academic. It is difficult, if not impossible, for *anyone* to live up to the ideal. But it would seem more difficult for some than others and increasingly so, not only explaining the low percentage of women achieving tenure track positions but even applying for them. Its realisation depends on a particular gendered and classed division of labour in the work organisation as well as in the home, that people within the university participate in reproducing, against their own best interest.

People had different ways of approaching the ideal and the particular discourse of masculinity related to it: some embraced it; some making use of it instrumentally without fully accepting it; and some utterly resisting it through
various activities – such as arranging critical seminars, writing blog posts or, in other ways, protesting. Despite the different approaches they, nonetheless, are held accountable to it regardless of whether or not they are on the tenure track.

5.6 Meta-discourse of neoliberalism: Holding schools, departments and people accountable

Every second year a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), consisting of eight professors from overseas universities and one representative from Finnish corporate life, visit and engage in evaluating the schools and their levels of achievement in terms of implementing the strategy and institutional goals of becoming world class by 2020. The evaluations of research quality are carried out in order

- To support and encourage the departments in their activities
- To support the Dean in managing and developing the School and in revising and sharpening the School’s strategic plans
- To provide the President with tools for developing the whole University

The reports are “utilised by the Aalto University Board in preparing and revising the Aalto University Strategy and in negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Culture” relating to funding (SAB Biz 2012, 2). Before the 2012 visit all departments were asked to collate and report on their faculty members publication activities; an excel sheet with information on each faculty member’s publications and bibliometrics was distributed via email. Some people, independently from each other, commented on the email, explaining how they were in favour of the transparency agenda, yet felt that it was yet another way of putting pressure on people to be more competitive. Also relating to competitiveness, texts regarding the evaluation system would once again invoke Finnish Values in order to distinguish Aalto University’s system from the American one: in Aalto people do not compete with each other, only with themselves. This becomes another politically correct way of obscuring the gendered and classed effect the access to individual faculty members’ productivity has on their evaluation of themselves and each other regarding how closely the ideal academic was approximated.

While there has always existed, and still exists, various and competing discourses of excellence within academia, these measures were not always as aggressively institutionalised as they are now. In a conversation with one department head, ‘Keijo’, I uncovered how, if these accountability steps are not followed, it has concrete consequences for the funding of the department and, thus ultimately on the amount of pressure put on existing staff.

Rebecca: Okay so you would have to create an identity here... around these topics, which would make it possible for you to fit into the Aalto strategy

Keijo: Yeah, and make an impact from...based on our own kind of drive...what we feel is the relevant thing to do and then to show that it is in international
comparisons kind of world class...which is some kind of slogan...but it implies that we have to be involved in this kind of scientific research dialogues [in journals – via publications] and that we get interesting visitors and get applications from abroad and um whatever kind of criteria we can in a way show that we are moving ahead...and so that a lot of measurements will be used on our activities and we have to make in transparent what we are doing and based on this kind of evaluations and comparisons and benchmarks will be made...and those that are in a way are better than the others will receive this leverage funding from central Aalto.

Rebecca: I am wondering...you tell me that you here on department level have to create a certain level of transparency, so it is possible to compare the various departments...have you as managers put in text how you want to measure quality in your department

Keijo: No we haven’t done that yet...of course we know what the Aalto management team is thinking and they have made some proposals...but it is still rather vague...it is in Tuula Teeri’s [Rector of Aalto University] slides...you can take a look what is in a way their proposal...but that’s related to these A journals...bibliometrics...and eh indicators and European research councils grants and so forth

Rebecca: Okay so do you also use those although they are vague...use them as a reference.

Keijo: Yeah we have to use them...that’s...this measurement...bibliometrics...we can’t avoid it anymore...its coming...it has been here...but it has been more institutionalised in mathematics and natural sciences and those areas so...they put the pressures on others to have this system [...]
in the “leftovers” of an old irrational employment system, outdated patriarchal structures and old boys networks that the meritocratic neutral and objective tenure track system claims to render redundant.

5.7 Summary

In exploring these issues, the focus has not been on tenure evaluations per se, but rather on the ideological code of the ‘ideal academic’ from the standpoint of particular junior female academics. This ideal is mediated by the texts related to the university’s strategic goals and the tenure track evaluation system. These standards are taken up, interpreted and activated by people within, as well outside, the tenure track system, in the evaluation and production-of-self. I have shown how gender, age, sexuality, particular academic orientations, and class enter as organisers in the work of activating the ‘ideal academic’ in the evaluation of oneself and others. This ideal renders certain types of work visible and others invisible, but also how some people’s ability to make the ideal actionable depends on the invisible gendered feminised work. Eligibility to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to the ‘ideal academic’ necessitates the activation of a particular geocentric masculinity discourse involving entrepreneurialism, informalism, and careerism. While everyone can, in principle, participate in this discourse and the practice connected to it, it would seem to work better for some than for others.

I have illuminated how, when made actionable, the textual ideal is not only reproducing an already existing gendered social organisation and inequality but actually reinforcing it. Furthermore, although people are shaped rather than overruled by it (although they engage in negotiation with it, and at times resist it), people are held accountable to it by a meta-discourse of neoliberalism and the managerial techniques of accountability, connected to its (discursive) practice, and currently rendered a position as if inevitable. There are concrete consequences at university, school, departmental, unit, and ultimately individual level, if one does not activate it.
6. Being ‘World Class’?!” The work of boasting

**You are invited to High 5 […]** High 5 is a great way to express success, celebration or affection between friends, colleagues, and co-students, without the formality of a handshake or the intimacy of a hug. It is specially used in moments full of victory (Aalto University Invites, 2015)

This chapter will analyse another significant aspect of activating the ‘ideal academic’ - the textually coordinated and encouraged work of *boasting*. The encouragement occurs textually through for instance invitations to join the High 5 forum, but also permeates the discursive images proposed on the university website and newsletters. The work of boasting is socially organised in that it works to strengthen the inclusion of some, yet the exclusion of most. It makes visible and strengthens the distinction between those who are “on the right track” and know how to speak the language of “world class”, and those who aren’t and do not speak the language. What distinguishes one from the other is not only *what* they boast about, but *how* they go about it. It strengthens and deepens gender-based inequalities in some ways, yet overcomes them in others.

6.1 Speaking from the heart or invoking a strategic language of excellence: a disjuncture

My analysis starts from one junior female academic’s experience of writing an application. ‘Tuuli’ is a white middle-class woman in her mid-thirties. She has two young children and a husband. When I interviewed her she was working on her post-doctorate and had recently applied for an assistant professorship, a lecturer track position and a prestigious Academy of Finland research position (which requires institutional affiliation). We met to speak of her experience with the application and evaluation process.

**Tuuli:** I emphasised research and I was on maternity leave while doing the application ... so you know sort of how I was thinking about what I will do next and these kind of things ... now I had these applications ready for different
places and I tried to edit them according to this [lecturer] position and I decided to focus on teaching ...and wrote that I found teaching a great source of inspiration and I want to continue doing this work and what's the value of teaching and blah blah blah ...and then I of course said that I was *world class* and blah blah blah

**Rebecca:** Did you use Aalto language?

**Tuuli:** Yeah I did ...and I did this also when I made the application for the Academy of Finland a year ago and I got the result that I [had done well but that I] didn’t get it and I was put on reserve ...which is of course very good because I was the only one here [in her own department] who got such a good position ...[...] I think it was more a signal that ‘let’s do this again next year’ [...] ...um in that process I actually asked [one of my close colleagues] to look over my research plan in order to put more of this *excellence vocabulary* emphasising how fantastic I am...so it wasn’t “my international colleagues” but “leading scholars of the field” and its wasn’t “good” but it was “excellent” ...and all these kind of terminology was used in my recent applications ...but in my teaching portfolio for the lecture track application I was also very true to myself because I was in this pedagogical training where we had to write a paper on our approach and theory of teaching ... and I had done some really nice things for that and I just used that and said I see my skills around three issues ...research based approach...caring... and what was the third one...being critical or whatever ...and I really wrote that from my heart ...and what I actually did was that I took extracts from course feedback and put that in the portfolio to illustrate that this is what students say about me

**Rebecca:** that’s a great idea!

**Tuuli:** ...and because the course feedback was so *excellent* [laughs]... I thought it was really nice to put them there ...so that's how I did that ...but I sort of think that no matter how my application had been I would have been in a strong position because people know my merits and that I have been teaching those courses that they would expect a lecturer to teach ...so I don't even know how much the *application* itself matters...[...] I actually have this dissonance in a way [...] and it was a conflict of *myself* because I do not like to *act* like that...but then again I said *well okay I am playing the game* and I am putting this in like this ...and it became *really evident* to me at a later stage

Tuuli’s account reveals a disjuncture between what amounts to a self-promoting boasting and institutionally encouraged and recognised language – which she and I both recognise as “Aalto language” and are critical of, and the experience of writing applications in a manner that focuses on the dedication and love Tuuli feels towards the work itself, involving much more measured and humble or self-depreciatory language. By involving a close colleague to ensure the entrance of more “Aalto language” or “excellence vocabulary”, Tuuli signals a simultaneous appropriation of and distancing from the language of boasting. The account accordingly displays a disjuncture between what she “wants” to write, and what she feels she “ought” to. There is not any straightforward distinction between what counts as the “ought” and what counts as the “wants”. The “want” is equally shaped within local social relations, and thus should not be treated as an expression of her *true inner*
feelings or as an innocuous point of departure. The point is rather to show the manner in which new translocally operating ways of knowing enter and shape local ways of knowing what and how to present oneself, or playing the game as she put it.

The “Aalto language”, activated in the work of boasting, is connected to an increasingly detached, standardised and institutionalised way of measuring, identifying and comparing competence and potential. A rhetoric of inevitable globalisation is invoked to legitimise neoliberal higher educational reforms. Reforms that have come to include increasingly narrow productivity, demanding ideals of excellence in academic work and downplaying the resulting increase in inequality for the ostensibly more worthwhile cause of securing national and organisational competitiveness, progression and survival. Concomitant with this development a new language of self-presentation is appropriated and legitimised (see e.g. Alvesson 2013) attempting to embody and make actionable the ideal academic and institutional intention of becoming world class.

Grandiosity is being democratized. By grandiosity, I mean attempts to give yourself, your occupational group/or- ganization, or even the society in which you live, a positive – if somewhat superficial – well polished and status enhancing image. As much as possible is targeted and becomes symbolically upgraded and made remarkable and impressive, adding to status and self-esteem. Issues of substance are marginalized. (Alvesson 2013, 8–9)

Drawing attention to individual qualities and merits is not a new phenomenon: presenting oneself strategically, knowing what to place emphasis on and what to downplay has always been important in academia. (e.g. Bourdieu 1988). The main difference lays in what is placed emphasis on and how it is done. While the language of boasting is increasingly accepted and democratized, its connection with textual standards of excellence within academia means that what is attached value as worthy of boasting about and therefore whom can legitimately engage in boasting is narrowed. The fact that the performance of academics, disciplines, departments, schools and universities is made textually visible, transparent and comparable, draws attention not only to who boasts, but activates an evaluation of who can legitimately do so. The work of boasting consequently becomes a legitimate resource for some to strengthen their already privileged position in relation to the ideological code and standards of the ideal academic, while reproducing the subordinate position of those standing in an unprivileged one.

6.2 The institutional language of excellence

Academia has always been infused with notions of excellence, notions that will hold certain cross-disciplinary and transnational/translocal commonalities.
However, what counts as excellence and quality will also differ among and within disciplines. Additionally, there are also different conventions and notions of personal conduct. Pierre Bourdieu provided, in *Homo Academicus*, an analysis of the classed and generational nature of divisions of academic capital. He analysed the practices of (re)producing hierarchies between people, job categories, departments, disciplines and universities in the context of French academia. He demonstrated, for instance, how the social class and academic capital of enrolled students and recruited academics differed in accordance to the culture/history/status of the discipline, and in accordance to divisions along the lines of metropolitan/regional. The same is of true in Finland. While Finland, unlike France, has no *elite* universities it does have certain elitist orders. Some universities, particularly around Helsinki, are considered more prestigious than other, smaller and regional ones. Similarly, certain disciplines are considered more prestigious than others. With the launching of the higher educational reforms and the decision to carry through the Aalto University merger, central stakeholders and policy makers hoped that Finland would be able to pride itself of having a world-class university.

In the texts that make up the institutional reality of Aalto University, the university, school and department strategies and the tenure track system, certain discourse of “excellence” can be glimpsed. Excellence, as highlighted in chapter 5, only acquires actionable meaning within the interpretive practices of a particular context, and the activation of standardised criteria facilitates deciding upon worthwhile objectives for action. As stated on the first page of the Introduction to the Aalto University Strategy:

> A strategy is a means to proceed towards a chosen goal by making optimal usage of existing resources and developing them. Clearly defined goals and focus are prerequisites for a complex organization to progress effectively and productively in one direction” (Aalto Strategy 2012).

“Excellent”, “leading” and “world class” people, departments, schools, universities and nations, exist as a virtual, abstracted, asexual, non-gendered, disembodied and detached institutional reality. What *counts* as excellence is textually operationalised as being successful in standardised international test scores, publishing in certain top journals appearing in certain ranking lists, measures of international mobility and cooperation, achieving certain prestigious grants etc. A more comprehensive specification of which journals, ranking lists, grants, teaching and international cooperation that count requires intertextual as well as indexical reading, and is only made actionable when picked up and activated by people, something which the university is aware of:
...the core of our university is not defined by a constitution, strategy paper or presentation. Aalto is a group of unique people, who are in a position to engage in ground-breaking cooperation [...] The realisation of Aalto University’s strategic tasks is made possible by people, internationality, infrastructure and service functions. People are Aalto University’s most important resource and success factor. For this reason, Aalto wants to create good work environments for its employees, provide them with challenging tasks, build career systems that offer sufficient incentive and develop the well-being of the community. Internationality and a multicultural approach are as important in the daily development of operations at Aalto as are strengths characteristic of Finland, upon which the unique nature of Aalto is founded. Supporting networking and mobility beyond religious, cultural and geographical boundaries is an essential part of the development of Aalto. Purposeful, high-quality work environments, tools and information systems, all developed for long-term use, as well as professional service functions, help our staff to focus on the core tasks of the University: teaching and research. (Aalto Strategy 2012)

The invisible element in the extract from the strategic text quoted above – as in any strategy, really – is that it never only defines goals and solutions, but simultaneously implicitly provides categories by which we can identify problems and “objects” for transformation (Knights & Morgan 1991). Such categories are listed to ensure internal - and, perhaps specifically, external stakeholders, such as the Finnish state, relevant ministries, foundations, the Finnish business community and other actors that current “shortcomings” are being managed and that continued support should be granted. These objectives for action were largely attended to in the “Striving for Excellence” (2009) research assessment exercise shortly before the university merger took place. Every second year a Scientific Advisory Board follows up and evaluates how well each department and school is performing in terms of reaching the strategic goals. Problems highlighting why Aalto University is not among the world’s top 100 universities are listed and defined. Firstly, it is argued to result from people not being internationally oriented and mobile enough. Secondly, not having the requisite modern and progressive attitude towards globalisation and multiculturalism. Thirdly, not being challenged to compete (based on the neoliberal capitalist assumption that competition motivates and necessarily leads to better work). Fourthly, not having appropriate coaching, support and guidance to make the right, rational and responsible choices. Finally, not having sufficient incentives for pursuing a glorious career. “Finnish strengths”, it emphasised, should be mobilised in the effort to overcome these defined problems. However, what counts as Finnish strengths and resources are not specified in the particular extract above, when considered with other brochures and texts in this context that this is “hard work, perseverance and creativity”, “egalitarianism” and “equality”. These values make up an important element in Finnish national narrative and self-understanding, where women entered full time employment relatively early on in the 20th century. Finnish weaknesses, on the other hand, seem to be those
that counter or somehow conflict with predefined notions of what it takes to be internationally competitive, mobile and hold a progressive modern global orientation.

Despite the wish to stand out as “world class”, several observers identified that standardised and institutionalised measurements of quality and ranking lists as a means of reaching the world class objective may in fact lead to more homogeneity rather than celebrated particularity. Equally, critical academics have demonstrated that the changing nature of academic work makes academics and intellectuals indistinguishable from “business elites and networked professionals”, and that academics are increasingly becoming characterised by uniformity (e.g. Parker & Weik 2013; Willmott 2011; Tienari 2012). Under such conditions boasting may be used by some as a resource to lift them above the mundane, closer to recognition as world class ideal academics, and for others, may become a shackle that locks them to their disadvantaged position of non-recognition indistinguishable from the mass within an institution, among other institutions, focused on standardised measures of becoming “world class”.

Insofar as the university provides individualised solutions to these defined problems – by offering incentives (such as economic compensation and eventual job security in the tenure track), guidance and support (such as coaching, career support events, development talks), and challenges people (such as placing high and clearly defined demands individuals and departments to produce particular kinds of work) – the responsibility for successfully making the strategic goals and intentions actionable is ultimately determined by individual willingness to develop the requisite competences, maintain motivation despite challenges, and convey an optimistic attitude towards the future.

All attachments, be they to another human being or to work, involves a certain optimism, the notion that the attachment renders something possible for us and fosters endurance. Optimism has, in the context of contemporary capitalism and changing academia, has developed a compulsory status. In order to be considered valuable and competent one has to display the right attitude. The language and affect of optimism is evident everywhere in and around the texts that comprise the university and play a significant role in boasting and the language of “striving to become world class”. It is not considered appropriate to be too critical of the new standards of quality and quality evaluation, but rather display an attitude of excitement, openness and celebration of the potential they confer. In this sense is optimism a powerful “affective form”, for what happens when optimism turns out to be cruel, when it is used to enable an object that is in fact disabling? (Berlant 2010, 93). Lauren Berlant explains the nature of “cruel optimism” as naming:

...a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic. [It] is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic
object in advance of its loss. [...] Usually that attachment exists without being an event, or even better, seems to lighten the load for that individual or group. But if the cruelty of an attachment is discovered, even in disavowed fashion, the fear is that the loss of the object or scene of promising itself will defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything (Berlant 2010, 94)

Both success and its lack can be individualised, deepening and widening the gap between those who “excel”, and are optimistic about their potential to excel on the given standards (be it cruel or not), and those who do not. Individualising responsibility to succeed, through individual guidance and support HR policies, draws focus from structural and institutional issues. Failure or success can be explained and individualised by using the institutional strategic scheme; but the strategy and institutional ways of knowing remain unchallenged. The institutional Aalto language of “excellence”, “leading” and “world class” triggers reading back to these strategic texts, reminding people within and outside the university the type of activities and attitudes considered valuable.

6.3 Doing boasting, Doing gender?

The language of boasting would initially seem to be an equally available resource for all, as long as they have the right attitude and textually sanctioned accomplishments and merits to boast about. However, a closer examination of the work of boasting reveals gendered practices enter as organisers of the what, how, whom and when. The previous chapter demonstrated how doing competence, making the ideal academic actionable, involves doing gender. Boasting, as an element of the ideal academic and making actionable world-class ideology, also involves the competent performance of gender. Doing gender is implicated in the evaluation of ourselves, and each other, as competent and legitimate or, alternatively, incompetent and illegitimate boasters, not in any essentialising way, but rather as a social relation.

What is considered worth boasting of is not based on neutral standards, but is instead a result of struggles between ways of knowing. However, because the standards have achieved status as neutral and objective, they can also form the basis for differentiating between people. Some people will be considered legitimate boasters, and they may use boasting as a resource to increase their value, and others as illegitimate ones, who, if engaging in it, will rather be drawing attention to their incompetence. As earlier demonstrated, certain types of activities are highlighted and others are downplayed in the institutional representations of academic work in and around organisational texts and evaluation criteria. The activities that are flagged as valuable are ostensibly presented as neutral, yet, in actuality contribute to the reproduction of a masculine order that works in the interest of small group of people. Although this ideal is difficult, if not impossible, for most men are better positioned in terms of approaching these. This is because women are still
expected to take on the majority of caring work at home and also a significant proportion of teaching hours. Furthermore, my data also showed that women undertake a larger share of the care duties towards colleagues and students at the university. This sexual division of labour has consequences towards boasting, since a female boaster may have less of the required merits to legitimise her boasting. In this way the work of boasting reproduces the institutional evaluation criteria as legitimate and unproblematic, placing the responsibility for failure to succeed on the individual.

This conversation with a junior academic, ‘Helena’, amply displays the way in which she, by taking note of the what and how of boasting work performed by others, become convinced that she herself has no legitimate place at this institution, that she is far from “the ideal academic”:

Helena: I think that to be able to this work properly ...to do it...it demands a lot of time and its very stressful...like you said you work a lot and during the weekends ...but that's impossible for me and always when I hear these kind of things I think wow how can I ever manage this [...] should I give it up...because it's not possible to put this much time into it...the current system...it needed much work already beforehand ... It need a lot of work already before the system we have now...

Rebecca: but on the other hand is it not reasonable when you have a family and it's difficult to make all the ends meet in terms of time

Helena: yes but it seems that nowadays nobody is interested whether you have a family or not ...people have ...there are lots of talented women and researchers with families back home and children ...and they have high positions and they work like crazy ...and it's like if you don't...it's not ...you can't use your children ...you can't take them here

Rebecca: You mean you can't use them as an excuse?

Helena: Yeah!

What we boast about is: how dedicated we are to our work, how much time and effort we put into it, and, in conjunction with the standardised measures of excellence we furthermore boast about how many publications we have had accepted, whom we are collaborating with, grants we have received, visiting scholarships abroad, which events we are involved in planning, and so on.

I realised while going through the interview transcript that I, with the best of intentions, am introducing a discourse in order to placate Helena. I activate the notion of “women’s time” or “temporal logic of care” (see e.g. Bryson 2014), often attached to women within a heteronormative order, where women are expected to be undertaking domestic duties, and try convincing her not to be too hard on herself. Helena rejects this by referring to other women as “talented” with “family, home and children” that hold “high positions” and “work like crazy”. However, in doing so she does not note their ability to do this as a result of them having children who have already left home or a partner who is willing and able to undertake the majority of domestic
responsibilities. Helena and I both come to reproduce gender stereotypical expectations. She assumes that the other women are able to strike a perfect balance between home and work, and she has somehow not. In doing this she individualises the responsibility for striking a balance, for success and for failure. Rather than question and problematize the textual standards, the practice of boasting itself and her colleagues institutionally encouraged boasting, she questions and problematizes her own abilities. Her story is a story of “cruel optimism”: she attaches value to ways of knowing quality and doing competence that operate against her own best interest. Attributing those standards and practices’ value and legitimacy is a way of ameliorating a concern that may otherwise develop into complete disillusionment with the university and academia itself.

A great deal of research on gender and work from different cultural and organisational contexts has shown that professionally successful women are expected to be, and described as more caring and emotionally expressive than men (Alvesson & Due Billing 1997, 30). Women are perceived as being more sensitive towards the needs and wellbeing of others, being more selfless, communal or cooperative in their work (Eagly & Johnson 1990; Rankin & Campbell 2006). Professionally successful men have, in turn, been described as being more ambitious, assertive, independent, self-confident, emotionally stable and competitive (Diekman & Eagly 2000; Eagly & Wood 1991; Williams & Best 1982) and for this reason they are often thought to more naturally hold positions of responsibility such as managerial positions or professorships. (Tienari & Nentwhich 2012; Fotaki 2013). I outlined in my earlier chapter how making actionable the ‘ideal academic’, and gaining eligibility to activate the discourse of excellence connected to it, required doing a particular kind of geocentric masculinity. (see e.g. Tienari & Koveshnikov 2012; Parker & Weik 2013). The concept of masculinity connected to the ideal academic substantially narrows down what constitutes sufficient commitment to work.

Although women are generally recognised as both ambitious and competitive, as able to do masculinity, they are only perceived as competent if they know how to balance this with the right amount of selflessness and care for others, or do femininity. This becomes clear from the way in which Helena interprets her successful female colleagues. While traditionally feminine values of care, well-being and cooperation are celebrated as important in some of the Aalto documents and events, this does not benefit women in competence evaluations because it is not measurable. In fact, the institutional celebration of care may very well lead to “re-traditionalizing” gender hierarchies because the feminised discourses and practices of care, selflessness and cooperative skills are attached in a taken-for-granted manner to the sex-categorised female body, and therefore treated as “natural” (Adkins 2004). A competitive, self-confident and aggressive woman will often be perceived as trying too hard, as bitchy, a show-off, and therefore as someone one would not wish to cooperate with (Tienari & Nentwhich 2012; Gherardi & Poggio 2007; Katila & Erikson 2013).

To the extent that boasting may be considered a particular way of doing masculinity – through aggressively and competitively engaging in the display
of one’s success, or “victories”, abilities and dedication as a scholar – the double bind also feeds into the how of boasting. The expectation that women should be more selfless, communal, emotionally sensitive and caring stands in opposition to the work of boasting. This expectation provided an interpretive framework for reading back from Tuuli’s account of how boasting felt somehow unnatural for her, and that she had to engage a colleague to insert more “Aalto language” or “excellence vocabulary”, despite the fact that she simultaneously expressed awareness of her merits.

The double bind means that women must work hard to obtain something that approximates to a balance. Women are however divergently positioned within the social relations to do so and the balance may be easier to strike for women who hold the appropriate textually documented merits, such as the student evaluation forms or publications that Tuuli refers to later in the interview. I would argue that the tendency to accept standardised criteria, evaluation forms and textual documentation of merits as neutral and objective signs of competence, functions to legitimise female academics’ boasting because it mitigates how this boasting involves doing masculinity. Women’s engagement in the work of boasting, in portraying an aggressively competitive form of masculinity, might otherwise have made recognition as a competent and valuable female academic difficult. However, aggressive masculinity can be appropriated and used as a resource by particular types of women who are privileged in relation to the standardised criteria of excellence.

6.4 Doing boasting, Doing Finnishness?

To understand how women and men, and women and women, are divergently positioned in terms of according to the textual standards, and understanding how they are differently positioned in terms of doing masculinity and boasting without being considered incompetent or too much, we must consider how the work of boasting is socially organised on other and related levels. In the strategic texts in and around the university, including that quoted earlier, I identified in conjunction with the call for a global mind-set, a demand for invoking “Finnishness” and “Finnish strengths” – defined as “hard work and perseverance”, equality and individualist egalitarianism – as a way of textually invoking difference among, and sameness, unity or coherence within, as central for the institutional intentions of becoming “world class”. The rhetoric of national identity and unity in the competitive environment of the global economy ameliorates and obscures social differences and inequalities by assuming that the culturally particular constitutes a resource that can be converted to value by all.

In order to understand how “Finnish strengths” can be invoked, and their relevance in understanding the social organisation of the work of boasting, we must understand that Finnishness is not an unproblematic or neutral category. In the textual representations being Finnish is to be modern and progressive, in sync with neoliberal understanding of the subject and oriented towards the global (see also Skeggs 2004). The Finnishness that is textually valued in a
seemingly friction free fashion should operate alongside the geocentric masculinity discourse. What in everyday presentations is recognised, declared and reproduced as being “typically Finnish”, has been identified by linguistic anthropologist Donald Carbourgh as:

One should not state what is obvious; If speaking, one should say something worthwhile attention; One should not invoke topics or themes that are contentious or conflictual (or more positively, one should keep present relations on harmonious ground); One should be personally committed to or invested in what one says; What you say properly – the unobvious, socially worthwhile, non-contentious, personally involving statements – forms a basis for subsequent interactions and social relations (Carbourgh 2005, 42).

Direct, concise and substantive talk is valued and considered a sign of honesty and sincerity. Superlatives, niceties and flattering oneself or others should however be downplayed, since, in this light, they can be perceived as stretching the truth, unnecessary excess, superficiality and exaggeration, regardless of the veracity of the sentiments.

While these characteristics may be considered undisputable facts defining a certain cultural essence, closer analysis reveals how they have been shaped within particular historical processes and social relations (e.g. Roberts 1989) that have given specific experiences, values and codes of communication status as neutral and equally available to all. All are evaluated in accordance to them, and competent participation in everyday working life, including that of academia, involves knowing and speaking these codes. However, upon closer inspection, people are differently positioned in terms of knowing or speaking these codes, and using them as a resource. In contrast, not knowing or understanding them has proven a source of inequality and exclusion (Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013; Trux 2007). This exclusion is not only one of non-Finns, but may indeed also be true of natives. There is no such a thing as a uniform Finnish style of communication: this will necessarily differ in particularities according to context and location within the social relations, and the nature of the relation between those who engage in communication.

Boasting can be seen as an inappropriate activity and language of excess, standing in opposition to the dominant Finnish (and hegemonic middle-class) codes of communication: propriety, self-control and honesty. Nonetheless it has, with the politics and rhetoric of inevitability, connected to competitive participation in global capitalism – used to legitimise neoliberal reforms of academia, welfare cutbacks and calls for individualised responsibility for personal, organisational and national success – opened up the possibility of using boasting as a resource to draw attention to and market oneself. In fact, it is presented as if all have equal access to this language providing they distance themselves from those elements of “Finnishness” that are old-fashioned, pessimistic and detrimental to the individual’s abilities to be something unique, excellent and applauded. In everyday life at the university putting aside these old fashioned pessimistic “destructive” elements of “Finnishness”
is often referred to in cultural stereotypes as “be less Finnish”, “be more Danish” or “be more like the Americans”, as long as they have the merits to legitimise it.

The language of boasting can be a resource for increasing the value of some people, units or schools who are already privileged in terms of speaking the dominant Finnish codes of communication, the dominant standards of quality and the ideal academic/ideal department/ideal school/ideal university. This has the effect of making us painfully aware of ourselves and others not in position to boast. Indeed, the language of boasting, if used by people, units, schools, and so on, who do not approximate such codes, standards and evaluation criteria – codes and standards I have already shown are not neutral or objective – simply draws attention to their incompetence, reproducing core-periphery relations of inequality (see e.g. Meriläinen et al 2008). In the following we see an example of an invitation to a research seminar in a fledgling discipline:

Dear All,

[Our] unit is happy to invite you to the seminar delivered by Dr. XX (USA), one of the most cited experts [in our field]. He will be giving a presentation named: “Do you think like an [...]? Are you SURE? [...]” Dr. XX has long experience [...] [and is] one of the world’s experts [...] his work has ranged from public policy analysis to cutting-edge research to designing [...] education and training programs that have won multiple national best practice awards. He also has a wide range of consulting and high tech [...] experience. Dr. XX has been recently nominated and announced as a finalist for [an American competition] [...].

I received a number of emails from both junior male and female academics who, independent of each other, wanted to make certain that I had seen the seminar invitation and that I knew how they felt about it: commenting on it in dismissive and ironic tone. The invitation, while offering a potted biography of the seminar presenter, is actually supposed to tell us something about the unit and people hosting him. It signals that they are internationally oriented and have prestigious international contacts. We learn something about who and what kind of research is worthwhile listening to: the kind of research that is “the most cited”, “wins awards” and is “world known”. The person inviting us to participate in the seminar has engaged in work of selecting what information to include and what to omit; and, as readers, we cannot be certain of the degree to which the description and representation captures the experiences and the account the seminar presenter himself would have given. The information displayed is aligned with the ‘ideal academic’ and the invited speaker is presented as someone who has approximated this ideal.
The dismissive and ironic tone in the comments I received junior academics on this invitation, is recorded in the following two extracts from an email correspondence between two junior female academics and myself:

(1) Are you sure?
Contamination is an ever-present threat in [this] environment.
Ha-ha. But seriously, isn't this seminar a perfect target for observation? A chance to catch dominant model dissemination in the act. Shall we go there?
One could observe crowd reactions, another could present some "innocent" baits to him... like items known to be part of the "package": flexibility, hard work, dynamism, liquidity, crisis-happiness...
Just an idea.

(2) I am SURE that I do NOT have the right MINDSET. I don't even have the right ethnographic mind-set to be able to endure observing such an occasion...

The extracts above display that the seminar inviters may have the what in place, but not the how. The unit hosting the seminar is a newly established discipline focusing on “best practices” and “hands-on” development of skills, only more recently engaging in academic theorising and publishing. The seminar invitation above suggests this. In the eyes of academics from more established disciplines with a different academic history, the “ideal mindset” it represents and boasts of, can easily dismissed as a sign of their academic incompetence and lack of self-control. It is ridiculed as embarrassing and something one cannot endure to participate in. The aggressive boasting may be particular and quite unique for the “culture” permeating this young discipline. Rather than increasing their academic value the unit’s aggressive use of boasting depicts it and people within it as engaged in instrumental self-marketing and gamesmanship, rather than driven from a place of passionate dedication to their academic work. They become fixed as not knowing their place or the consequences of the “mindsets” they are promoting. In saying this, I am not engaging in any particular defence of the unit, but merely highlighting that new units with little or no academic history may face a harder time being considered legitimate boasters. In that way, small or new units, who may be in greater need of drawing attention to themselves, might be punished for it. Those who are academically established and already working in accordance with the standardised measures may not need to engage in equally loud and aggressive boasting – something that is clear from the seminar invitations within my own department – and thus may use more subtle forms of boasting as a resource to further supplement their already privileged standing. The same logic may be true at the level of both universities and schools.

Within established disciplines, it should also be emphasised that both the nature of boasting and people’s tolerance of it differs depending on whether we are talking of application/CV writing or face-to-face/email conversations. In the case of a funding application, people who may be unfamiliar with the
particularities of your work or what constitutes “world class” within your field will be involved in evaluating your eligibility to a grant or position. Therefore, explicit use of a language of “world class” may here be directly encouraged in an effort to stand out from the crowd. In the case of email or face-to-face communication between people from the same or related disciplines, familiar with which academics, activities and places that count, such boasting would however be seen as misplaced or unnecessary excess. In interviews I would often be presented with the notion that those who focused on selling themselves were somehow compensating for the fact that they were not brilliant academics. As one male professor from the school of technology explained:

... most of what they do is not that great but they are very good at selling their ideas and writing properly... presenting properly their ideas and networking and to be honest I don’t like this at all...I don’t want to be successful I just want to do my work properly and focus on what I like and nothing else..

The work of boasting oneself, the department, the school and the university is both criticised as practice and embraced as something that engenders self-confidence at least by those who can turn it to a resource for increasing their value.

Tuuli: I think that all the practices here are sort of leaning in towards these measurements ...if you are looking at the weekly news letters ...there are these articles “these are the people who have published in the right places” ...I even found myself there ...which was quite absurd
Rebecca: yeah ...I found you there as well and was gonna ask you how you felt about that
Tuuli: actually ...we talked a lot [...] I actually found myself Oh my God one of these articles again...and then I clicked on the link and I noticed Oh I am there...it was such an old publication that I had forgotten about it ...I kind of felt these ...there is something about the dynamics of managerialism ...that when you meet the standards you actually feel good...and I cannot say that I did not feel good about getting my name there in relation to my publications...but then again it is sort of seducing ...

The simultaneous embracing and distancing oneself may be explained through the historical position and self-understanding of the academic community and intellectual work as being somehow detached from the everyday world; as occupying something of a “separate sphere”. Accordingly, the academic has often been considered “some sort of outsider, a person distant from and standing above the mundane, like an absent-minded professor who has his
mind on higher things” (Parker & Weik 2013, 5). In our increasingly mediated and complex world, the academic is often granted a certain expert position and ability to provide impartial objective analysis and guidance. The good academic is seen as able to, “reject the inherited set of values that pertain the society they live in”, in this case the values connected to competitive neoliberalism, managerialism and selling oneself that would increasingly seem to define working life in contemporary Western society. The good academic is somehow able to escape the social values that shape the lives of people in their surroundings, taking part in a global community in which allegiance is granted solely to the objectively best scientific and ethical practices (Parker & Weik 2013, 5). The “reality” is, however, that most people cannot really escape these, because they are held accountable to them and the rejection of doing what is textually required of them has consequences. The art is to display the activity of boasting as not being empty or instrumental, but an expression of one’s optimistic, passionate and authentic dedication to work. The rewards that follow from it may be celebrated as a good, but never as an end in itself. Once again, passion is presented as something we all have access to, if we search hard enough. But, in reality, only a very few privileged people do in fact have the freedom to do what they truly feel passionate about (Willmott 1995). This too, is present in Tuuli’s account when she tells me – after having explained how she had incorporated the “Aalto language” – how she also “had time to really think about what is important”, “was really very true to myself” and “I really wrote that from my heart”.

The standardised textual evaluation measures supplement an already individualised conception of success. It provides a measure for who can legitimately engage in, and use, boasting as a resource, and who can, due to the compulsory optimism, legitimately engage in any critique of the textual evaluation measures. Every so often I would hear remarks from colleagues about academic articles critical of bibliometrics and journal ranking lists along the lines of ‘yeah, well that person hasn’t even published in those journals himself, so he is probably just suffering from an inferiority complex’. As Tuuli put it, that is, “the seduction of managerialist measures”: people reproduce them even when they are operating against their own best interest.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter I have analysed the textually coordinated and institutionally encouraged work of boasting as one element in making actionable the institutional intention of becoming world class. While boasting is not a new phenomenon in academia, characteristic of boasting in contemporary academia is the way in which it is now socially organised in terms of what one boasts about, how one boasts and ultimately whom can legitimately engage in and use boasting as a resource to further their position. The institutional and organisational encouragement of boasting (e.g. through forums such as “High 5”) works in conjunction with the individualisation of success and responsibility, and the downplaying of structural, social, organisational and
institutional reasons for failure to live up to standardised success criteria. Despite the claim that boasting is a resource that is equally available to all who have merits to boast about, I have revealed how boasting is shaped and organised by ruling relations of gender, Finnishness, compulsory optimism and quality. Firstly, men are, as a result of gendered divisions of labour within and outside the university, better positioned in terms succeeding on the standardised measures of quality i.e. what one should boast about. Moreover, even when women are qualified in accordance to these standards, they face the double bind shaping how their boasting should and can be performed. Doing boasting involves doing competitive and aggressive masculinity, and due to expectations placed on women to do femininity, a woman may not benefit from boasting, but rather be punished for it. Therefore, to achieve the desired equilibrium she must work to strike a careful balance between the two - which is more or less impossible. However, due to the dominant assumed notion that the standardised measures of quality are neutral and objective, one might also argue that to the extent a woman in fact succeeds in living up to or exceeding the standards, she may not be faced with the problem of the double bind. In that way boasting can be used as a resource by women who are already privileged within the institution, while reproducing the marginalised position of those who are not. Alongside inevitable participation in the global knowledge economy and celebration of international standards, it has been emphasised that people within the university should highlight unique Finnish strengths: strengths that have elsewhere in the intertextual complex been defined as “hard work and perseverance”, egalitarianism and gender equality. Being Finnish is presented as unproblematic and as if it is not a product of ongoing social, political and contextual struggles. Emphasising strengths involves downplaying certain Finnish characteristics that may not match with boasting, and call for a global outlook and entrepreneurial spirit, and it may not be equally possible for people to put aside Finnish “weaknesses”. Invoking Finnish strengths and overcoming its weaknesses may not be equally available to all as a resource that will help them elevate themselves. This may be a matter of generational relations, but also a question of disciplinary culture and history. In fact boasting may, if not done competently and carefully, be regarded as a sign of incompetence. Careful consideration and knowledge of how and when boasting is appropriate is significant, as it can very well be perceived as if the discipline or person is not driven by authentic concerns for knowledge and academic work, but rather by strategic or instrumental concerns: something that does not fit into the discursive construction of academics and academia driven by a passion for producing the best possible knowledge, and by concerns that are raised above those connected to competitive neoliberalism, managerialism and selling oneself.
7. Moved by love? Writing for academic publication

[...] **What makes you most proud of your career?** My inspired students who don’t shy away from challenges, and of course the praise my courses have received both at MIT and here at Aalto University. I try to present the subject matter of my courses intriguingly and to encourage students to make extra effort. To witness them really take off with their ideas is wonderful. [...] In ten years we have created from nothing an internationally recognised and renowned research field [...] in Finland. Thanks to perseverance and longevity, we now have our own niche in the world of science: we publish in esteemed journals and hold chairs in conference committees and editorial boards.

**Which characteristics make a good professor and an academic career?** A profound interest and passion for the subjects at hand. Without it top research is not possible, since you must devote a lot of time to your work. Furthermore, the ability and courage to make tough choices, and also to question and revise your own thinking, are crucial. Fluent and persuasive communication, both written and verbal, is tremendously important in research and industry alike. If you can’t promote your ideas well, no one will take heed. I would love to see our students trained to perform more.

**What do you appreciate in a student?** Intelligence, passion, courage, ardency and communication skills. Intellect alone won’t get you far! Also the knack of not accepting everything we professors say at face value. Always retain a healthy critical outlook. We Finns very rarely complete a whole degree abroad; we only tend to make brief visits. By no means do I wish to deter talented students from Finland, but only to remind them that comfort and fear of uncertainty rarely make good grounds to make life choices. (Aalto Websites, faculty member profile, 2015)

In the two previous chapters I have shown how the ‘ideal academic’ and the ambition of becoming ‘world class’ leads to the acknowledgement and celebration of certain types of academic work and people, while downplaying others. More particularly, there has been an unprecedented increase in the celebration of publications in journals featuring particular international ranking lists. I have shown how eligibility to activate the ‘ideal academic’ and engage in the work of boasting is socially organised in terms of what, how and whom. In this chapter I want to go into further detail regarding the impact of the institutional intention of becoming world class on the work of writing. I go
further into the how. I explore the ways in which a particular discourse of “love” organises the activities of scholarly writing for publication, but also show how people are differently positioned in terms of activating this “love”. I argue that the ‘responsible’ academic with the right attitude and potential downplays the link between citable knowledge and epistemic “status”, and activates a compulsory discourse of love/passion in order to produce and maintain a discursive framing of academia and the university as a place concerned more with knowledge than its status on a global ranking list.

The usual way of critically studying the effects of the publication regime has, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies 2008), been to make rather generalised critiques of the system. The tendency has been to discuss and analyse the regime critically on behalf of critical scholars or all academics within a particular national context. This has involved claims that contemporary academics in the publishing machine suffer from some sort of informed false consciousness. These studies have been extremely valuable in raising critical awareness of the problems for academia and academic work that follows strategising and gamesmanship in publishing (e.g. MacDonald & Kam 2007; Willmott 2011; Tienari 2012). However, they often lack a particularised standpoint and reflections on how such standpoints may offer new perspectives on such questions. Hence, my exploration starts from concrete experience and from a particular standpoint within the social relations, the story of ‘Helen’. A story I believe may offer new insights.

7.1 Telling the story or producing knowledge that counts: a disjuncture

Helen is a white, middle-class, Finnish woman with a husband and two young children. Helen completed her doctoral thesis a few years ago and was, at the time of the interview, working on her post doc. Her daily schedule is similar to those of other junior female scholars, having relatively short working days in order to combine work and family life. But her experiences and account of her everyday life at the university and in relation to writing up a publication differ somewhat from those of other junior female scholars I spoke to. This, however, also makes Helen’s experience a powerful point of departure for explicating the disjuncture from which I investigate the social organisation of junior female scholars’ everyday lives.

Helen is funded by the Academy of Finland – a foundation which in its own words offers funding for “scientific research of the highest quality” and the “most promising young researchers” – the majority of her working hours can be dedicated to research, although the institutional affiliation (which is required in order to receive the funding) means that she is expected to take a fair share of teaching and supervision tasks, as an important element of “advancing professional competences”.

Helen usually wakes up at 6 a.m. and leaves home, by car, around 7 a.m. in the morning, arriving at work between 7.30 and 7.45 a.m. at the latest. Depending
on whether she has teaching responsibilities or not, she usually starts her day at her desk writing a few emails and doing her “brainwork”. The hours before noon are her “precious hours for brainwork”. That’s when she has time to write and get inspired. She finds that publishing motivates her; she enjoys the “game” and finds it intellectually “rewarding”. She finds that manuscript authoring, the review process, and engagement with “the right kind of “reviewers” leads to an increased quality and refinement of her work and ideas.

In explaining what drives her to write and publish articles, she tells me it starts from the data. Her main driver is that something unexpected, unique and counterintuitive, challenging existing knowledge, arises from the data and tells a story you would like to pass on to your research community. However, she adds that she is, at the moment, also motivated by the challenge itself: of doing something difficult and seeing whether she can succeed in it. She sets high standards and always wants to go as high as possible in terms of the quality of journal and voices a considerable regard for international journal ranking lists.

In cases of co-authoring, a certain negotiation of where to publish has to take place, as well as a realistic evaluation of the quality of the data. When writing for publication, she explains to me the importance of remaining sensitive to what counts as good writing in different journal contexts and it is important to know “how far one can go”.

In Helen’s story there is a disjuncture in her motivation for getting published. On the one hand she has an empirically motivated, exciting and surprising story to tell, and finds the task of doing so intellectually stimulating and rewarding. This involves meeting and speaking with her colleagues, and having time to spend with her two young children and her husband. On the other, finding that the journals that count are represented on particular lists; that getting into those journals can become a goal in itself, a sign of success, because, as playing the game implies, these are the publications that gain textual representation as worthwhile. I also found this disjuncture in conversations with other scholars: a great deal of work is put into finding or looking for ways to strike a balance between these two motivations. These motivations are not necessarily, or always, opposed to each other, but many of the junior female academics I spoke to, experienced it as such. That is, they found that the profiles of the journals that count did not fit as well with their philosophical, methodological, theoretical, and everyday commitments or interests.

The way in which the diverging ways of knowing are negotiated in the work Helen does is shaped by a number of material circumstances and discourses-in-action that constitutes particular social relations and interpretive practices (Smith 1990b). In the following section I identify some of the discourses and texts active in Helen’s and other scholars’ accounts of their work of doing and assessing quality. I unpack the role they play in making people eligible (or not) to participate in activating the ideal academic and the institutional intention of “world class”. As I shall show how they shape the process in a manner meaning that the translocal notions of quality become favoured in particular ways above the local notions of quality. This does not mean that the local
notions are fully overruled, but rather that it becomes shaped in particular ways.

7.2 The ruling relations of quality

In elucidating the ruling relations and the ways in which they shape the work of writing for publication, I carried out an ethnography of the work as well as the texts that are referred to directly or indirectly. Although critically reflexive of the fact that there is never a straightforward relationship between the appearance of a journal on a ranking list and the quality and excellence of work, Helen nonetheless constructs “the highest possible standards” and “aiming for the best quality” as taking part in the A journal review and publication processes.

Rebecca: would you go for any journal or do you ...
Helen: [she interrupts me] I have standards! Because I think anything can be published ...there is always someone willing to publish anything and there is so much...and I think that aiming for higher ...putting the ...your goals higher you also have to produce better work and you learn more and become better and you’re challenged...and I think it's a waste of time to put something to a journal that goes through straight away and they just say thanks, that's a great thing ...
[...]
Rebecca: so I wonder how do you go about selecting or choosing journals?
Helen: well...I think you have to look into the quality of the work there first...if you don't think the data and findings and observations you have in mind...if they are not sort of that strong it’s not worth going for the highest quality journal...and if I believe that this is something that might be able to make it to a high level journal then that's my target ...I want to get it as high as possible ...because then that also means that the review process is better ...well maybe that's too simplistic to say because you cannot be certain of that...but usually the more critical the reviewers are... the tougher comments you get and the better work you will develop as a result of that process...but you have to have a starting point already ...so that's one thing ...other thing is if you have sort of special issues within certain journals ..I might submit a paper there because it fits this special issue... and that sort of things...
[...]
Helen: this publication gave me the feeling...I can do this ...I have done it once and I can do it again...I know what the game is and knowing that is as important as writing the work ...to understand how the process goes and um what kind of...how you are supposed to do things versus how you are not supposed to do things ...you have sort of become canonised to the American A [top] journal culture for good and bad ...
[...]
Rebecca: you touched on it already ...but before we move on...you speak of A level journals ...but what does that mean and where do you find out whether it is an A level journal
Helen: well...the usual way... all universities have their own rankings ...but we can say that there are certain journals that are sort of canonised ...into being these A level journals and there [Helen lists a number of top journals within her
Disciplinary attitudes towards relatively standardised measures of quality and excellence vary greatly, and there will also be differences in terms of the degree of disciplinary consensus on this question. Michèle Lamont (2009) argues, on the basis of her extensive study on academic judgment of funding applications, that disciplinary variation occurs on three levels: the extent to which people believe that excellence in fact exists; what defines excellence; and thirdly, and perhaps the most importantly in explaining variation, whether excellence is primarily considered to be located within the object of evaluation (in this case for example the article manuscripts) or in the “eye of the beholder” and the inter-subjective negotiations among those that engaged in its assessment (Lamont 2009, 58). The variation is partly explained by differences in the epistemic culture of the discipline and whether the academics there consider evaluation of excellence unproblematic, objective and neutral if carried out in accordance to the right methods. Additionally, whether evaluation is itself considered an exercise of power, which necessarily and always involves particular standards that have been concealed and treated as if they were neutral. Lamont distinguishes between four “epistemological styles” that influence which position is taken: (1) Constructivist, which involves giving voice to different people and the practice of reflexivity in research (that is, sensitivity to what one’s being in the field does to the field and people one observes); (2) Comprehensive, which involves careful attention to context, i.e. cultural and historical sensitivity; (3) Positivist, which favours generalisability and hypothesis testing; and (4) Utilitarian, which is similar to the positivist style but places emphasis on producing knowledge that has instrumental value (Lamont 2009, 57).

The standardised measures of excellence connected to the journal ranking lists referred to by Helen, is a manner of thinking and evaluating quality that has a particular historical and disciplinary origins. It is a way of thinking, measuring and organising which originally arose in particular disciplinary contexts and out of particular historical processes, notably in the post-World War II US natural sciences (Garfield 1995; Hamilton 1990; Hamilton, 1991). It entered other fields and disciplines when OECD recommendations and EU standardisation policies in the late 1990s began asking universities of member countries to engage in self-assessment and comparison on such areas as research quality and international mobility. Because there was an enormous
number of journals and little certainty of the quality of the publications within
them, impact factor indexes were constructed which “turn[ed] citations into
the key currency” (Li & Rankin 2012, 2; Willmott 2011) and made comparable
and accountable people, publications, departments, and universities which
had previously been incomparable and unaccountable (see e.g. Ciancanelli
2010). The usage of such lists in evaluations is based on the assumption that
they make it possible to overcome the irrational features of the old systems,
those that did not result in the selection and recruitment of the best candidates.
It is believed that, by making the evaluation criteria transparent, reaching the
top would in principle be achievable for anyone sufficiently gifted, hard-
working and ambitious. The ranking lists are assumed to “represent reality in
as transparent a manner as possible” and “be free of subjective components
contributed by the knower [as well as] psychological or historical factors or
other elements to do with their apprehension or mode of apprehension”
(Macintosh 2002, 114-116; see also Rankin & Campbell 2006). The notion that
the quality of a journal or publication can be measured objectively by the
number of citations is, in itself, based on a particular, yet concealed,
standpoint (Smith 1990a).

Indeed, as I have already shown, the ideal academic generally, and the
ranking lists more particularly, are not unproblematic. They constitute a
“fundamentally political and cultural site that represent accommodations and
contestation over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies”
(Mohanty 1997, 16). I therefore engage in an exploration of the current
epistemic hegemonies and epistemic conflicts concealed by the ranking lists,
and related to the work of doing and evaluating quality in manuscript
authoring and publishing. The research that counts at Aalto University, and
that which Helen herself identifies as quality, is that which is published in
journals high on the journal ranking lists. These journals, with a few
exceptions, favour particular types of research that tend to exclude
experimental writing and critical work; furthermore, with a few exceptions,
the journals on these journal-ranking lists are US based, which gives a positive
bias towards articles relevant to US readership. This is a fact that places data
from US, and perhaps the UK, at the centre, and data from countries such as
Finland in the margins. Authors with data from these side-lined countries
must work harder to justify and argue for their relevance (Merilainen et al.
2008).

Furthermore, there is an epistemic dimension to neo-liberalist organising. It
represents an ideology (Smith 2004) that “collide[s] and conflict[s] with ways
of knowing that characterise some disciplines, domains and individual
identities in higher education” (Adam 2012,72). The neo-liberal emphasis on
the marketable, measurable and comparable knowledge production poses a
threat to epistemic diversity. Indeed, in the setting of Aalto University, one
academic manager confided in me about the conflicts that arise almost every
time a candidate is taken off the shortlist on grounds of not having sufficient
publications in the journals featured on the most influential ranking lists:
Academic manager:...our Dean’s message has been if a person has two or three publications in [mentions a particular ranking list] there need not be much discussion about whether the person is at the right level ...but then if there isn’t that we need to look at the achievements of the person in other ways...we do of course make a holistic evaluation of the person anyway...but it’s hard to have a person tenured without ...you cannot be tenured without any clear evidence of research excellence ...but what it means in different disciplinary contexts ...that’s where the disagreements start! Because not all disciplinary areas are represented on [this particular] list or can be measured in the same way...looking at your discipline from the outside is always emotional and it’s hard to agree that the requirements would be lower in some discipline than in another...

It has been suggested that neoliberal organisation of society and academia is associated with a “positivist epistemology and the commodification and marketization of knowledge” (Adam 2012, 73) – that is, neoliberalism is best fitted to two out of the four “epistemological styles” identified by Lamont (2009): the positivist and the utilitarian. The epistemological styles connected to neoliberalism marginalise the other comprehensive and constructivist styles because they are not so easily branded, competitive and “mass marketable” as the positivist and utilitarian, e.g. in terms of speed of data production, results or how erudite one might be and number of citations achieved.

Helen spoke to me about the politics of writing for a US based ‘A’ journal. We spoke more particularly about what she names “closet constructionism” or “downplaying the social constructionist approach”. Firstly, she explains, that in the US you can loosely distinguish between two positions in research: Pragmatist or Positivist. You have to downplay positions that fall outside these:

Helen:...there are certain things you don’t say...you downplay it...you don’t talk about social construction ...you know “social construction of What!”? It’s their favourite thing to ask [...] you sort of hint it a little bit but you don’t claim...I am a social constructionist and we do interpretive research...it’s suicide you know...you don’t even have to claim we are doing research for understanding the micro foundations of things ...you don’t put the word micro...it is micro but you don’t write micro anywhere.

A few years after this interview, Helen explained me that the journal she had targeted was slowly beginning to be more amenable to including interpretive research, but that, at the time of the publication of her article, this had not been the case. However, there are also a number of other conventions that shape the form and content of a manuscript, for instance in terms of whom and what you cite. In terms of recognised and canonical literature, Helen
highlighted that within all fields there will be a group of “usual suspects” who have themselves been published in the top journals. If you wish to be published in a US journal you must cite authors canonised in those particular journals: “if you don’t cite them the reviewers will ask “why don’t you cite these guys” and they are basically wondering whether you have read the literature”. She observes that European academics will have to cite canonised US ones if they want to signal their competence within their field; it is not sufficient to cite canonised European scholars as much European academic literature is invisible in the US. She tells me that reviewers will often also suggest authors whose work you ought to study: citing the right authors is crucial to securing the reviewers’ familiarity. You can, however, as she (and her co-authors) has, to some extent, done herself, “use them ceremonially”.

Aalto University looks favourably upon academics who have worked in the US or are cooperating and co-authoring with US based academics. This partly also relates to the journals US academics using US data not only want, but have to target, in order to keep their jobs. Helen mentions that her co-authoring with American scholars in the US tenure track system has demanded commitment to “A journals or nothing”. Therefore, even if Helen had preferred to target other journals, her cooperation with US colleagues meant that it was out of the question.

In the light of this, it becomes clear how the ranking lists, as a means of evaluation, are not wholly neutral or objective, but “speak” from a rather restricted epistemological standpoint and furthermore favour data and knowledge relevant for a US based readership. In the institutional reality of the texts, and in their everyday activation, however, the links between “marketable” knowledge and its epistemic status (see also Pereira 2014) is often downplayed in order to maintain a discursive framing of academia and the university institution as a place concerned with knowledge production, rather than its status on a global ranking list. Problematizing this from the standpoint of junior female academics is not straightforward. For it would be essentialising to claim, for instance, that male academics are more likely to subscribe to positivist and pragmatist epistemologies, and women to interpretivist and constructionist positions, and that women, for that particular reason, are systematically unfavourably positioned in terms of the A journals. I have no wish, nor data, to support such a claim. However, I would claim there is a masculine order and taken-for-granted way of knowing operating from within these ranking lists and, more particularly, the work related to gaining access to them: it arises as masculine within a heteronormative middle-class order and neoliberal capitalist political economy. Both men and women can do masculinity (Halberstam 1998), but due to the particular expectations placed on women it is easier for men to practise it. More specifically it relates to the way that particular ways of knowing and doing quality are activated within the social and ruling relations of love. Helen, like the other academics I spoke to, and myself, are shaped within these.
7.3 The ruling relations of love

Some of the feminist love studies and debates focus on love as an energy, ecstasy and root of passionate bonding, ultimately holding the capacity to speak back to, and potentially overthrow, power relations (see e.g. Jonasdottir & Fergusson 2014). They recognise love to be more than just another element of in the exercise of patriarchal power and exploitation built in the heterosexual middle-class institution of marriage, central for the reproduction of the capitalist system. I certainly think and believe love to be a deeply felt emotion and/or energy that cannot be reduced to ideology or discourse. I also take love to be able to take historically, contextually and relationally divergent shapes and having the capacity for resistance (see e.g. Jonasdottir 2014; Swidler 2001). However, my focus here is different. I am interested in the ways that people are held accountable and reproduce ruling ways of knowing quality through discourses of love that do not always work in their own best interest. From the standpoint of junior female academics I seek to explore how a particular discourse of love, coupled with a discourse of a neoliberal ‘responsibilised’ self, in and around the institutional intention and ideology of becoming world class, organises everyday practices. More specifically, how it organises the practice of article authorship in ways that (re)produce gendered (and other) social relations and hierarchies within academia.

Liisa, whom I introduced in chapter 5, spoke to me about her experience of a certain shift in what she called “the culture” of her department. She and many other junior female academics explained how it had previously been a place where people were first and foremost academically motivated by working on the subjects they loved. Moreover, she explained that while academic work had always been time consuming, there had previously been a much more explicit understanding of the need for spending time with one’s family. With an increased pressure on junior scholars to be productive and accountable for their time, she found herself having to play a game that deprived work of meaning and love, and made family life more difficult. While this was a shift that had taken place gradually over the last 10 years, it became institutionally manifested in the local setting of her department and life with the creation of Aalto University

**Liisa:** When I came back...so this has been going on for a long time already...this was already I think you know [years before the merger] when I came back...I had been away [...] on maternity leave ...and um that’s when I felt ...I remember it so clearly because I came back and I felt really depressed and I didn’t know what was going on because I always loved this thing you know...the research I always felt that this was exactly what I wanted to do and I just could not figure out what was going on [...] you know I liked my own research and what I was doing but...and then gradually I realised that it was just ...I remember reading a paper that [a female colleague] had written...it’s a Finnish text [...] I remember I cried when I read this story because she had somehow captured you know these distresses and emotions [...] I had felt ...that there was
no specific measures yet [...] It was not a requirement but it was the culture in the way that everyone started talking about publications ...you know professors ...some professors started saying and department unit heads [...] started describing things and it was always focused on these external things and achievements in a way ...how many publications and sort of everyone was just talking about them ...and it started influencing me in a way ...because I realised that I have to start doing these kind of things [...] I had to start think in terms of ...not just that I am doing this research because I love it but [...] I also had to start thinking in political terms ...kind of like the games aspect ...what I find to be the game of the whole thing ...you know I have to think about doing publications ...what kind of activities do I have to participate in in order to ...when I actually graduate I can also have work here ...but that was like a constant struggle in a way...

Scholars at all levels of the academic hierarchy, and much critical literature published on the “evils” of gamesmanship in academia (e.g. MacDonald & Kam 2007 + 2011; Willmott 2011; Clarke, Knights & Jarvis 2012; Tienari 2012; Nkomo 2009), invoke a plot structure of “academic nostalgia”. This is characterised by speaking of the past in an idealised manner and as being better than the present; it involves a sense that the past is irretrievably lost, and therefore results in “homesickness” or “loss of belongingness and cosiness”. Nostalgia is a way of “institutional remembering and forgetting through which members of academia interpret their work experiences and attach meaning and purpose to their lives within the organization” (Ylijoki 2005, 560). Nostalgia does not describe an actual past but rather makes current tensions and problematics visible by providing a frame through which the past is interpreted, socially constructed and narrated (Ylijoki 2005, 555). For indeed, the past also had its problems, its own gamesmanship, its own institutional restraints, its own inequalities, and measures of excellence resulting in particular patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

Engaging in gamesmanship is the politically strategic act of making choices based on doing what is (institutionally) recognised and rewarded in the form of status. This is different from being motivated and committed on the basis of one’s moral convictions, ideals and/or sense of purpose and meaning in one’s work (e.g. Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001; Räsänen 2008; Korpiaho, Päiviö & Räsänen 2007; Räsänen, Korpiaho, Herbert, Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005; Ruth 2008). Focusing on the work that gains textual representation and ‘playing the publishing game’ involving the authoring of article manuscripts for, and getting published in, particular journal outlets, represented on particular journal ranking lists, is by many critical scholars appositional to being driven by love, passion or moral commitments to one’s work. Thus the disjuncture here would seem to arise between what the author “wants” to do, and what she, as a result of performance measurements, is somehow “pressured” to do (more or less consciously) in the production of a manuscript for publication in particular publications. I should like to assert that the act of targeting and participating in the academic debates in these particular journals is not
necessarily or always in opposition to claiming or expressing love, meaningfulness and moral commitments to and with one’s work, as is clear in the cases of Helen and Tuuli whom I introduced in the previous chapter. I would argue, however, that this love and commitment – how we ascribe value to something, designating it valuable/valueless – is itself shaped within social and ruling relations; it is itself socially organised, speaking from and favouring particular standpoints within the social relations.

In this context, the institutional demand that academics should focus on the journals in particular international ranking lists is connected (as I have shown in the sections above) to activating particular ways of knowing quality, but also to what counts as commitment and love. Being recognised as a good scholar involves recognition of what one claims to love, as well as how one loves it. The scholar must display a personal dedication that goes beyond, and possibly conceals instrumental concerns for reward. Through a textually mediated discursive framing of the university and academic work as driven by love, the link between the standardised definitions of quality performance measures and epistemic/ontological/methodological streamlining are downplayed.

However, in order for it to have this effect, a specific form of love is required. Two love discourses at work in this context: that of passion and that of care. By expanding on the ideological code of the ‘ideal academic’, it is, however, a particular kind of committed, focused and exclusive passion that is connected to, or associated with, the academic vocation (e.g. Harding, Ford & Gough 2010; Clarke, Knights & Jarvis 2012), and highlighted in the organisational texts. When I type the word “passion” into the internal search machines at aalto.fi I get 4650 hits: “passion driven research”, “passion driven teaching”, “passion based learning”, “academic work as a profession and passion”, “follow your passion”, “entrepreneurial passion”, Aalto University values “Passion for exploration; Freedom to be creative and critical; Courage to fail and succeed; Learning by doing”, and so on.

The impression gained is that passion as a discourse of affect has been appropriated and connected to a neoliberal ‘responsibilised’ self (see e.g. Skeggs 2004) in the drive for excellence and world class status. This ideal and alliance between passion and neoliberal individualism makes invisible that people are differently positioned within the social relations in terms of practicing this exclusive passion and the ‘responsibilised’ self.

According to this understanding of love we need pay no regard to material and social conditions, since passionate love for something, or someone, is supposed to “conquer all, to transcend material constraints, to lift us above the mundane” (Jackson 2014, 36). This passion discourse is often invoked when, for instance, speaking of entrepreneurial activities (see e.g. Cardon et al 2009) and also closely connected to the notion of “the free spirit” associated with academic and intellectual work (Parker & Weik 2013). It is often considered that the academic should be “free from” political, managerial or any other interference: free to travel in the world of ideas, unhindered by constrictive, mundane and practical questions and to focus on producing knowledge driven by their passions. More recently, however, academic freedom from external
pressure or constraints, it has been noted, has turned into academic freedom to do something, and do it in places where you are “expected to perform better”. By choosing to join the academic institution you are expected to accept “soft compulsion” (Parker & Weik 2013).

The conditions of possibility for the reflexive expression of passion is shaped in complex interaction with the ideological code of the ideal academic, discourses of excellence and material underpinnings. However, passion has achieved status as something compulsory. In order to be recognised as valuable academics, we ought to feel passionate about our work. Our presence and activities in the “external” world of the university, must correspond our true “inner” feelings. The authority of neoliberal discourses and values of individuality and authenticity of the “telling self” would have us leave academia it if we are unable to accept its current drivers (see e.g. Skeggs 2004; Mäkinen 2012). Independent external Career Coaching services are offered to help early career researchers both individually and in teams to identify their competences and strengths, facilitate deep reflection, consider career possibilities and clarify short or long term goals inside or outside the University - in short, to formulate plans for the future for which they have true passion33. In principle, anyone can find their true passion – it is proposed as something equally attainable to all, as long as they display the right attitude and will to find it/find themselves/tell themselves. This may involve the realisation on the side of the academic that her academic passions may or may not be fulfilled within institutional confinements of Aalto. Whatever the choice, the reasons are not to be found in the institutions and structures in and around Aalto, but in individual preferences, attitudes and feelings. The individual activation of the passion discourse becomes therefore a way of distinguishing between academics of value, and those without.

The coordinating power of passion flows from spaces in between the institutional material texts that organise. In the context of Institutional Ethnography it is, therefore, not a text in the sense defined by Dorothy Smith. But then again it does, I would claim, nonetheless concert and organise the social, since it is a space or an empty sheet filled in with the help of interpreting and drawing on other material and existing texts. The fact that it is an empty space is central for making the institutional goal of “becoming world class”, through representation in top journals, actionable. This is because the organising ability of passion is intensified the very second explicit communication ends. This became clear in a conversation I had with one male Professor, ‘Hans’, from the School of Arts and Design.

**Hans:** ...now I hear all these glorious stories about the tenure track system and what I in particular hear is that someone like myself should go through this open call system again after I have contributed roughly six years and I have committed a lot of my personal and also my professional life to this place [...]

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because I am an old horse in this position I know from experience that...I mean some say oh it does not matter you can do this it's just a formality um but I don't see this as a formality because I know from experience that there by surprise is something else coming around the corner or someone else coming around the corner...and then the commission starts to think oh we haven't seen that before so maybe that's the way forward and that's of course competition...the core element of competition...but I have a different point... I see this simply as a sort of disrespect also of what I have done so far and I also expressed this I said ...okay if you say that the only way to continue our love affair is um a new open competition or a new open position you can reapply ... then I don't want to take part in this [...]

From the above extract, it can be deduced that the kind of love that is rewarded institutionally is that practised by the ‘responsibilised’ individual who seems able to predict the needs of the organisation, take its expectations, particular situation and ambitions into account without having to be explicitly asked to do so. Many (not all) of those who worked in Finnish academia before the reforms, the Aalto merger, and Aalto’s decision to adapt a tenure track system, had been used to other ways of working, and some are engaged in doing work that does not gain textual representation. Accordingly, all these people would therefore have to be asked explicitly to change their methods and priorities. However, asking explicitly has the disadvantage of highlighting the existence of a power relation that, as such, stands in contradiction to “authentic” dedication of a passionate academic. The valuable and responsible academic has not only identified what is valuable to feel passionate about, but knows how to practise their passion in a way that individualises their pursuits, hiding the sources and the social and ruling relations that shaped it. How the passion for a “common goal” and the holding of “common attitudes, common taste, common visions, and common aversions” came into being is mystified through its individualisation. However, as the experiences of my participants show, the academic in the presentation of her or himself must show the ability to recognise what should be highlighted and downplayed in the presentation of self and individual choices. The university can, if you have not achieved tenure/permanent professorship – as highlighted by the Professor quoted above – decide to terminate the love affair if something or someone more valuable appears.

Care is many things, and caring relations may be of various forms: between family, friends, colleagues, and so on (Lynch 2014). However, what characterises care and the love as care discourse, and distinguishes it from passion, is primarily perhaps that it is concerned with the material and social underpinnings. Caring and caring activities take their point of departure in the mundane, everyday ways of knowing and bodily attachments. Care is about concern for the needs of others and oneself, as they arise in the local and immediate.

In Aalto University documents’ emphasis is placed on “caring” and “sharing” as central for “Aalto’s success story”. Framing the university discursively as a place where collegiality and care for one’s colleagues and students is a central
value, something we should all engage in, serves a purpose. It downplays the competitive instrumental individuality that follows from the institutional promotion, and activation of, the ideal passionate academic and its effect on the academic community, just as it downplays how care work is not equally distributed or rewarded. It would seem that love as care is a discourse that, when activated, involves simultaneous idealization and downplaying. Idealized because it is recognised as a necessary and foundational productive force in the everyday life of academia, academic communities, and all academic work functions, emotionally as well as materially. Downplayed because, depending on who performs it, and which aspects of care work we speak about, a great deal of it is often taken for granted and made invisible. This kind of caring and sharing that is highlighted and encouraged, while not rewarded economically, is that which supports the development of a “culture” of passion and ultimately contributes to the competitive agenda of the university (as the opening extract of this chapter, chapter 7, illustrates). This could, for instance, involve reviewing manuscripts for top journals, arranging conferences, article and manuscript tutorials and research seminars, which teach students to be internationally oriented, entrepreneurial, courageous and passionate. Other kinds of care work, such as time spent on emotional and/or academic support of colleagues or students are seldom recognised textually or rewarded, but indeed taken for granted. For that reason, one female professor pointed out to me, that she had noticed, when very busy, that she had no time or energy to care for her PhD students and colleagues. She did not like herself when she was like that, and would exert a great deal of effort to ‘get back to who she really is’. Both men and women engage in care work and in activating the care discourse, but given the continued existence of gender stereotyped expectations within this context, women’s engagement in it is often considered natural by themselves, and indeed others, and therefore becomes imperceptible until the second they fail to live up to the expectations. Conversely, when men practise care it tends to be recognised and applauded and its lack is also considered more acceptable. In this way women’s care work is made exploitable in the interest of becoming “world class” (see e.g. Adkins 2000).

7.4 The gendered social organisation of writing with passion

As demonstrated, the translocal and institutional ways of knowing quality have assumed a character as if they were neutral, objective and true, and now operate across and coordinate several different contexts and people. It becomes a “perspective” from which we see ourselves in the world to evaluate our place and that of others. While sometimes generalising and standardising across time and space, and other times invoking categories of difference in the attempt to fulfil institutional intentions, it is never adapted in completely identical ways by different people in different contexts. Rather than being stable, it is continuously a site of struggle and negotiation, interpreted through local ways of knowing; interpretations that themselves produce and reproduce
the social - and ruling relations. Moments of observable struggle, negotiation and (re)production take place at national and international conferences, in ongoing email correspondences, short or long term research visits abroad, participation in courses and workshops and via debates with and feedback from reviewers and editors in international and national academic journals, etc. One female Professor, ‘Kirsi’, divulged her experience:

Rebecca: where do you publish ...what is important for you when you select were to publish and why

Kirsi: there is kind of two streams [...] ...so I have tried to publish in both, but it’s much harder for me to publish in the [...] journals [representing one of the two streams] because they expect theoretical contributions to [particular] theoretical discussions...and that's not really my main interest...I am much more into sustainability questions ... my home is much more on the sustainability side. I don’t know if I mentioned in our last discussion that sometime in mid-November we received a positive decision for publishing an article in a special issue [...]...um what it took was two years...which is not that long for correcting rounds. All the time the editors have been pushing us ..."what is your contribution to [a particular kind of] theory" [...] what came out of it is a good article but it has much more emphasis on [the aspects of specific theory development that she does not find super interesting] [...] so there is something with those processes were you kind of really think...what is the point?

Rebecca: how about choosing journals

Kirsi: Impact factors!

Rebecca: does it matter to you?

Kirsi: yes it does ...it is really is that the system...you can chose to ignore it but then in one way you shoot yourself in the leg...and I don’t have any real objections to why one would ignore or not ignore...if you want to publish in a none impact factor journals or more explorative journals ...it’s also possible...but it is difficult to justify yourself if you do it ...nowadays you need to have a certain publication record...I mean it’s not that I...I mean there are people who are really kind of strategizing around this and really looking were they can get most citations and do on...I think I am somewhere in between because I am interested in the impact factors but I am not...and this I should learn...which is to start following up on citations...how many citations do my articles get and these index numbers ...because now I am sitting in one of these two professor committee...and I am seeing there, very clearly, that this citation index scores clearly play a role... a major role in candidate selection...

Kirsi’s experience of writing for publication in top journals facilitates further engagement with the ruling relations of love shaping the work of Helen and other junior female academics. Helen, in order to secure her and her American co-authors future position in academia, and ultimately the competitive position of the university, must focus on the right kind of journal outlets. She must accumulate a certain track record in order to convey future potential and a low investment risk. As a result the protracted process of negotiating and
editing the article manuscript content, may result in making decisions that make the final manuscript look rather different from the initial idea.

Love as passion, is, as mentioned, very much present in the way academics speak about their work. Broadly speaking, most people in the context of academia, and Aalto University more specifically – contrary to what the plot structure of academic nostalgia would have it – have not historically been in a position to focus on doing the things they love and find meaningful. Academic freedom to do what puts your heart on fire has always, as it is now, been a privilege conferred to few. Traditionally, in Finland and elsewhere, those people have been white, male, middle- and upper-class professors, privileged with sufficient funding and institutional support (see e.g. Bourdieu 1984). Of course, this privileged standpoint has created the basis for the connotations that many hold towards academics and their work in general: being a vocation rather than a profession, where the distinction between leisure, hobby and work is indistinct. For many scholars this is indeed their experience. They love their work and cannot imagine doing anything else (e.g. Clarke, Knights & Jarvis 2012). The demand that people are encouraged to cooperate and co-author with American academics, who are part of a competitive tenure track system themselves, and publish in particular rank listed journals, with particular profiles and preferences, narrows down considerably the kind of “passion for exploration” scholars can have. It shapes the way in which knowledge is produced and the justification for choices that would seem in opposition to one’s own interests and commitments. It appears that if you accept being part of changing academia, you must simultaneously accept “soft compulsion” to do what is considered valuable, what can be accounted for textually and do it in particular places.

What role do the discourses of love – passion and care – play in the ruling relations in and around manuscript authoring for top journals? How can these discourses entanglement with the neoliberal discourse of the responsibilised self be explained as shapers of the experience of Helen and other junior female academics in this context?

The pressure to publish in particular top ranked international journals demands, as I have shown, detachment from ways of knowing quality that may have been fostered in local epistemic communities. Due to the time-consuming nature of writing for such outlets, it is also likely to lead to a certain detachment from local responsibilities that cannot be accounted for textually. While this detachment can never be fully achieved by anyone, it is easier for some than it is for others. An individual’s position within the social relations will shape the extent of their ability for detachment. The detachment I speak of here is not necessarily physical (although visiting the right academics in the right universities and participation in international conferences is certainly encouraged), but involves an international/global orientation, that has rhetorically been depoliticised and achieved a position as inevitable. This detachment has consequences for knowledge production, as my conversation with Helen demonstrated. Indeed, while it is not fully standardised, predictable, or clear beforehand, what is done to an article manuscript during
a review and revision process for certain ranking listed journals, it seems, in the case of Helen, and others I have spoken to, share the commonality of taking them away from home: away from locally shaped epistemic, ontological, theoretical, methodological and other attachments and commitments. This involves giving up on, and reshaping: ways of writing; the repositioning of the manuscript in terms of theoretical framing of the data; eradicating reflexivity; and downplaying interpretivist social constructionist epistemological commitments. These are replaced with “canonised” ways of writing and structuring, making the article citable far beyond “some little minute crowd” for Anglo-American readers, replacing European citations with American ones, bringing in methods – such as “Kai square” and “data triangulation” – for proving data quality by hidden positivist standards and making more universal or generalizable arguments, based on the notion that detachment from a particular social location or context forms a kind of objectivity. The language and methods of positivism are so deeply embedded in academia at large, and these top journals more particularly, that this process often goes undetected by those who (re)produce and consume this kind of research. This is even so to the extent that those who criticise positivism use positivist language and notions, impacting upon what passes as “rigorous knowledge and what does not” (Kinchloe & Tobin 2009, 513). In this manner, authoring article manuscripts for these journals becomes a way of reproducing the ruling position of positivism. The critique of positivism relates to the feminist critiques of knowledge production (e.g. Haraway 1997; Widerberg 1995), showing how dominant understandings of knowledge production as something that could be objective and the basis of universal claims are masculine. Disciplines, theories, styles of writing, methods and concepts were explored from this standpoint. Indeed, it was claimed that through activating masculine knowledge production instruments patriarchal power relations could be sustained; and women’s subordination reproduced within academia, academic knowledge production and society at large.

From participating in, recording and observing a ‘Meet the Editors’ session at a large international conference, hosted by, among others, the journal targeted by Helen and her co-authors, I learned that, as a general rule, they always seek to secure reviewers sympathetic towards the methodological and philosophical commitments of the authors. With the overload of review tasks facing many top reviewers due to the ‘publish or perish’ system, and the fact that this very time-consuming review work is not recognised textually or rewarded (e.g. Tienari 2012), it is not always possible to meet this ambition. As a result authors may end up with less than ideal reviewers for their papers. In the case of Helen and her co-authors, as well as other interviewees, this was what, to some extent at least, transpired.

While the textually transported review comments are not standardising the way a journal-ranking list is, the discourse of passionate love, attached to a responsibilised individual, downplays the ruling position of particular ways of knowing quality and the manner in which these are confirmed and reproduced through the performance and evaluation criteria. This becomes evident from
the way in which discourses are activated while engaging in dialogue with reviewers and editing the manuscript accordingly. The author must, in the name of passion for exploration, learn accept being “taken away from home”, lifted above the mundane, above the material and social constraints, and the restricted local ways of knowing. Lifted to a supposedly higher, more distinguished and international/universal quality standard. Practising true passion involves practicing geocentric masculinity; striving for the best you can become on the global playground of possibility and cooperating with equally geocentrically minded people around the world.

Any decision that would seem in opposition to the desires of the reviewer will have to be carefully considered:

Helen: it can be difficult... and sometimes you reject something in the first reading and then it changes over time ...with the first exposure you are not ready to accept...and that's normal because things are strange to you...they are alien...that has nothing to do with me...it's very human...you have to go beyond that and go back and see...and then explain why you won't do it

Authors are held accountable to the reviewers and the journal, and ultimately to ruling standards of quality, but they are not, it seems, held accountable to our standards. This is at least the case until they have proven themselves “world class”, by which time their own standards and practice may have been transformed. As Helen observes:

Rebecca: so how about structuring your papers ...presenting it in a particular logical way ...is that something you have learned from this process
Helen: yes. Absolutely!
Rebecca: or has it come from before...
Helen: No its absolutely ...it becomes canonised ...and it’s easy... very easy ...once you have learned it, it becomes very easy to reproduce that...and then it’s actually more difficult to write in another way ...to do different and more innovative structuring of your work ...and I really encourage that...you don't have to go with this canonised literature review gaps and research question and methods and how do I address this question with this data dadada...it’s just one possible way...but if you go for A journals... that’s the way that is most likely to pay off ...the most rewarded structure ...
Rebecca: but is it your preferred way of doing it or is it simply that way you have come to do it
Helen: [answers immediately] it's the latter ...it's the latter...and um ...it's the latter...it's something I need to think about um but I think it's the latter...
Rebecca: yeah this is one of the things...that's how I understand what you are saying is that because you have been writing in a way it shapes you way of thinking about writing because it becomes easier to do it like that...
**Helen**: mmm, yeah absolutely…it’s the practice of writing and it shapes the way you think...how you read...what you look for in the articles and the way you cite them in your work...it’s the whole package

Any critique or disagreement with the assigned reviewers’ comments should be guarded and formulated in an extraordinarily diplomatic tone. Self-control and propriety are the moral values of the middle-class (Skeggs 2004), and academia is highly shaped by these (Bourdieu 1984). To be recognised as a good academic you need to display the ability to argue soberly why a particular comment is not relevant.

**Helen**: you have to keep on board the ones that like you and your work...and then you have to get on board the ones that don’t like it [...] this reviewer still didn’t like it and made some comments we thought were quite irrelevant and asked us to do things with our data that we couldn’t do and wouldn’t do [...] you have to understand where he comes from...and I say him because I don’t know...and eh so you have to understand...I mean I have some reservations to certain kinds of research...I could not review quantitative studies...most of them I couldn’t...I mean hardly any...I would be thinking that they are simplistic and uninteresting and they don’t offer anything new and that sort of thing...so you have to take into account where this guy comes from and respect that...respect the views...and explain that...in a very equal and firm tone...why do I do this and not this...why don’t you follow this advice and so on...you have to be really considerate and care about the reader...and how he will take it [...] So we wrote a letter to this reviewer and explained him everything and got him over too [...] he gave one comment that added an aspect to our contributions and we made a really big deal out of that...that this is a great idea and we really really value it and everything else we rejected..

The problem with this, as I see it, is not that one keeps a friendly tone, but rather that there in the seemingly normative claim and expectation that a competent author should be able to detach themselves from their own commitments and seek to identify with the perspective of the reviewer – and ultimately the journal, the university and the ruling masculine discourse of passion and positivist paradigm – despite the fact that the reviewer did not attempt to identify with their perspective. The reviewer’s apparently unreasonable attitude and irrelevant comments can be rationalised and legitimised as a result of their coming from another epistemological and methodological background, while they, in their own reading and critique, did not attempt to understand where they came from and their commitments. Ceremonial or not, it reproduces the hierarchical relation between ways of knowing and doing research, reproducing one position as more scientific than the other; one having to justify itself and the other as a taken-for-granted norm and standard.

Helen and her co-authors appear to automatically assume that any reaction and response to the reviewer will be interpreted not as a sign of their
philosophical and methodological commitments, but rather as emotional, irrational and invalid. Through explaining themselves as they do, in a very “firm and equal tone”, they are consciously trying to negate this possibility. Nonetheless, at the same time they reinstitute the ruling position of particular ways of knowing through reproducing the dominant way of understanding academic work as something objective and detached from emotion. In doing so, they reproduce the notion that emotions, locally shaped attachments, and clear subject positions are detrimental to conducting the best possible science and displaying oneself as a serious academic. Of course, the journal’s profile, and the ruling ways of knowing that it reproduces, have also been shaped within particular social and historical processes and local context. It too is produced from a particular standpoint within the social relations, and equally imbued with values and emotions. However, through time and complex textual processes it assumed a position as if it were above such attachments and standpoints, lacking a clear or explicit social position and seemingly able to “evade dominant ideologies” and “challenge the status quo” (Parker & Weick 2013).

From this point of departure we can begin to discern the manner in which any conflict of interest between the authors, the journal and its reviewers should be approached. The conflict is transferred from something that arises between diverging epistemic and paradigmatic positions within the social relations, to the individual author.

Helen: this publication gave me the feeling...I can do this ...I have done it once and I can do it again...I know what the game is and knowing that is as much as writing the work ...to understand how the process goes and um what kind of...how you are supposed to do things versus how you are not supposed to do things ...you have sort of become canonised to the American A journal culture in good and bad ...

The challenge is not merely one of clarifying the paradigmatic tensions and how they shape the ways in which research is performed and quality evaluated. Rather it becomes a question of the author’s ability and willingness to take responsibility for handling and solving the conflict. Although this is not the same as “submitting” to a reviewer comment, this ‘responsibilisation’ reproduces, rather than disrupts, existing ruling relations; particular positivist objectifying paradigms, and masculine ways of knowing, involving the display of an ability to dispassionately detach oneself from the local. This approach does not seem to work in the interest of junior female academics, indeed, it reproduces a gendered division of labour in which they hold the majority of local commitments both at the university and at home. Furthermore, it marginalises theories, methodologies and philosophical commitments that cannot be characterised as mainstream.
7.5 Summary

In this chapter I have analysed another element in making actionable the ideal academia and the institutional intention of becoming world class. In the previous chapter I touched upon how the work of boasting involved careful consideration of the what, how and whom, in order to be recognised as legitimate. I explored the ways in which ruling relations of quality shape what would be considered as academic quality and rigour in article manuscript authoring. Particular epistemic, ontological, theoretical and methodological commitments are valued and others downplayed within the journals appearing on the ranking lists of significance. The standardised notions of quality narrow down the freedom scholars have to manoeuvre and be creative, and, as a result, they may edit and frame their work so that the final manuscript looks very different to their original aspirations. A particular discourse of “love”, with passion and care as two distinct forms, organises the activities of scholarly writing for publication. I also demonstrated how social relations of gender place people differently in terms of activating this “love”. I argue that the responsibilised academic with the right passionate attitude and potential is willing to be “taken away from home”, and in doing so, downplays the link between citable knowledge and epistemic “status”, and activates a compulsory discourse of passion. This action is performed in order to produce and maintain a discursive framing of academia and the university as being concerned more with knowledge than its status on a global ranking list.
8. Reflections and Conclusion

I set out on my doctoral research and thesis work with two research objectives. The first was to understand the construction of the ideal academic in changing academia. More specifically, I wanted to understand how the ideal academic is (re)produced in gendered material and social relations that take different expressions across diverging local settings. My point of departure for doing so was the everyday lives of junior female academics and how their experiences and activities in the local setting of the department, school or university are connected to people elsewhere/elsewhen through the institutional orders that make up, coordinate and shape activities within changing academia.

My methodological and theoretical guide for carrying out this work was Dorothy Smith’s sociology for people: Institutional Ethnography. This method of inquiry helped me explicate how the local processes and practices are shaped within translocal objectified social relations that coordinate people across differing local places. That is, to understand how standardising texts for evaluating and measuring quality mediate the ideological code that comprises “the ideal academic” and organises discourses, shapes local experiences and leads to a particular form of gendered social organisation of academia.

My second, and connected, research objective was to develop a research approach drawing on Institutional Ethnography and to illustrate how Institutional Ethnography can be performed. Doing research for and with people means learning from their everyday experiences and work knowledge. However, to accomplish this implies careful attention to the processes and relations that may distort efforts to place their local actualities at the centre of investigation. Rather than leaving it at a methodological intention to seek avoiding institutional capture (Smith 2005) I have sought to explain the work involved in minimising objectification and “preserving” the standpoint of the participant, as well as when, how and why this “preservation” was not always possible. This has involved careful attention to divergent interpretations of texts, sensitivity towards different texts diverging ability to shape, and an ongoing assessment of the social and ruling relations of my research practice.

Once committed to the standpoint epistemology of Institutional Ethnography I began the research process by inquiring into the experiences of junior female academics. Their activities and perspectives regarding changing academia and how they were interconnected, materially and relationally with the institutional order and other actors became the point of departure for understanding how gendered social relations of academic work is organised.
and enacted among academics in changing academia. On that basis I could begin to consider factors that would facilitate my exploration of how the gendered social relations of academic work were and are coordinated and shaped by texts in and around the practices that define and evaluate the quality and potential of academic work. Finally, I could, on the basis of the responses to these two questions, begin to answer my main research question by considering how the text mediated ruling ways of knowing gender and academic quality shape and organise academics in changing academia. Ultimately, I could say something about how junior female academics are held accountable to ways of knowing that do not necessarily work in their own best interest.

In this final chapter I will start by reflecting on my methodological and theoretical choices. I will discuss how Institutional Ethnography has helped me engage in descriptive analysis of the gendered social relations of academic work, excellence and evaluation practices in changing academia. This section will also include a consideration of how well I have managed to reach my second research objective, and will postulate empirical threads for what should be further explored for better understanding the gendered social relations, but that did not fall within the scope of this study. Following this, I will summarise the results of my empirical analysis and relate my findings to those gendered social relations identified in the review chapter as needing further consideration in the light of the rhetoric of inevitable globalisation, changing capitalism, and changing academia and academic work. Finally, I discuss how the further exploration of social relations of class and resistance, developing from my empirical explorations but beyond the scope of the study, could help further clarify the gendered social relations of changing academia and the ideal academic further.

8.1 Theoretical and Methodological reflections

In achieving my research objectives and answering my questions, I have in my discovery of the gendered social relations of academic work aimed at incorporating, maintaining and returning to the voices and experience of junior female academics. I have sought to clarify the knowledge they have of their everyday work, the value they place in the activities they conduct, and their self-understanding and self-evaluation. Equally, I have sought to explicate the material and relational practices which they may or may not be fully conscious of in the articulation their doings and sayings to me; practices that have become hard to contest because they are largely naturalised and taken-for-granted in the given context.

In order to discover and unpack the social relations that the activities, experiences and articulations of junior female academics form part of, and the ruling relations shaping them, I also integrated many other voices and forms of knowledge. I conducted participant observations/observant participation of everyday formal and informal activities within and beyond the University premises. I conversed with subjects and conducted in-depth interviews
focusing on the experiences of people divergently positioned within the academic hierarchy and the social relations of academic work. I gathered specialised texts/artefacts used and referred to by participants, and produced a map of the intertextual complex/hierarchy in which these specialised texts operate. It was a research process that involved alternating between the voices and experiences of junior female academics, reflexivity, additional data production (involving divergently positioned people), and analysis and reading scholarly literature as well as fiction. It has been an analytical journey involving several iterations of interpretation and reinterpretation.

Smith’s version of standpoint feminist epistemology offered a relational and context sensitive point of departure for exploring the ideal academic from the standpoint of junior female academics’ local and embodied lives within changing academia. The standpoint worked as a kind of Schutzian “null point” in the exploration of social and ruling relations that become articulated and activated in particular ways in everyday academic work practices at institute, department, school and university level. These produce and reproduce the position of junior female academics within the social relations in ways that are not always obvious.

In my attempt to discern gender and notions of quality as social relations in changing academia I have drawn on insights from other research within feminist studies and, more broadly, higher educational studies. This has particularly involved contributions on gender performativity and reflexivity, gender in organisations and gender in academia, masculinity studies, and educational sociology. In doing so I have not made theory-based objectifying assumptions, but rather used these insights to illuminate the situated local actualities of junior female academics as they participate in and are shaped, though not determined by, institutional orders. They are relational actors and their actions, both those that are visible and those that are invisible in institutional representations, produce, reproduce and sometimes resist those institutional ways of knowing. Given that the concepts of Institutional Ethnography are material and relational and designed for opening up, rather than prematurely defining focus, these have allowed me to unpack subjects, and the local communities of which they are part, as shaped in ongoing struggles and negotiations: as being in-the-process-of-becoming.

Smith’s Merleau-Pontyan point of departure means acknowledging and taking seriously each subject’s unique experience, but also radical entwinement with the world. This means that we cannot assume, but neither can we reject, the possibility of a world in common, of experiences approaching each other as concentric circles. My analysis has involved the identification of patterns – commonalities made possible through the generalising effects of ruling relations – as well as portraits – unique experiences that the ruling discourses do not always “speak”. The “map” I have drawn of changing academia from the standpoint of junior female academics is not a completed work. It can be drawn at a different time, from other perspectives and with a different research focus, and may accordingly look
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quite different. I will return to the findings of my studies in the next section, but first address what falls beyond the scope of my study.

Firstly, Institutional Ethnography aims at challenging objectification by, among other things, avoiding institutional capture. I attempted not to treat institutional concepts as descriptive, but as powerful organisers that flag and make visible certain ways of knowing, while downplaying and making invisible others. Getting beyond institutional capture entails being cautious not to introduce institutional concepts myself, and to maintain a sensitivity and awareness that would allow me to react promptly to such instances during my engagement with the field and my participants. In other words, making certain that the accounts of my participants would move beyond institutional concepts to elicit the embodied actuality of their perspectives, everyday activities and lives. This is also central for producing and maintaining sight of the standpoint in my explication and analysis of social relations. In relation to my second research objective, throughout my research process and analytical endeavours I aimed to illuminate the work involved in remaining attentive to the social relations of my research practice. In my thesis I have highlighted what I consider to be an inbuilt tension in doing institutional ethnography. While it is a method of inquiry that offers an approach for overcoming objectification by giving voice to the research participants and using that as methodological point of entry, it also involves, as does all such inquiry, participating in the ruling relations of research. Smith herself acknowledges this, arguing that Institutional Ethnography is not therefore about overthrowing these, but rather about contesting and challenging them. This is why the concepts of Institutional Ethnography are empirically empty. They can be seen as ethnographic meta-concepts designed to direct attention and open up, rather than prematurely categorise, the empirical world. Smith does not, however, in her own work, show how one should challenge the ruling relations in the actual process of investigation and engagement in the field. Indeed, one might claim that the very nature of Institutional Ethnographic inquiry means that one cannot prematurely assume what shape the relations between the researcher and their research participants will take, or to what extent these will be relations of power or ruling. Therefore, this must also be subject of empirical scrutiny. By clarifying when ruling relations enter into and shape the process of investigation, challenging my ability to “preserve the standpoint”, I have attempted to do precisely this. Despite efforts to challenge the ruling relations of research throughout my own process this was not possible at all times and in all circumstances. This has necessarily impacted upon my ability to produce and maintain the standpoint of junior female academics. Throughout my research process and analysis, I have sought to compensate for this by taking means of reflexivity, awareness of shifting subject positions – as researcher, friend, colleague, subordinate, protégé, woman, young, privileged, fluent English speaker and so on – in the field and genre analysis into use. This has also included reflexivity in terms of how I myself introduce ruling ways of knowing that come to shape the dialogue between myself and my
participants. These highlight the shifting power imbalances between myself and my participants that could not always be fully overcome.

Secondly, the design and focus of my research was on junior female academics, mostly embedded in departmental contexts that have a relatively good representation of women among the faculty and a generally supportive attitude towards mothering. In Institutional Ethnography we acknowledge that gendered, raced and classed social relations are different, yet nonetheless interconnected in complex ways. The ambition of challenging objectification and the ruling relations of research means that discovery and explication of how the social relations are formed must involve paying continual attention to these interconnections and how they shape a given standpoint. However, this does not exclude the possibility of maintaining a focus. The focus of my research was on gendered social relations of academic work. My participants, whose portrait stories and experiences became the point of departure for explicating disjunctures and the gendered relations, were of socio-economically rather well off, they were of middle-class academic backgrounds, heterosexual and often married, of white and ethnically Finnish background and with healthy children. These women were privileged in that they could, in principle, replace dependence on work with that of a husband, because their partner was in a position of being able to provide for them should they choose to go part time or opt out. They were also privileged in the sense that they were able to speak the language of the institution, that is, they knew how to play the game, but were not necessarily interested in doing so and were reflexive and critical of the institutional ways of knowing. However, as also indicated throughout my analysis, among my junior female participants were also people who were differently positioned. They were in a socio-economically vulnerable position, having a hard time making ends meet economically, either because they were single parents or had a partner who did not have a stable income. These junior female academics could not substitute dependence on work with dependence on a partner, and therefore did not feel it was an option for them to opt out. These were often also of working-class background and found that the language and games of changing academia were something they had a hard time managing to articulate and perform. They knew what was appreciated, but not always how to achieve it. My empirical investigations made me aware that social relations of class play an important role in understanding the gendered social organisation of the lives of junior female academics. Unfortunately, going into detail with the classed social relations was beyond the scope of this thesis. Further exploration of the social relations of class would therefore be a necessary future analytical step towards explaining how junior female academics are divergently positioned in being able to turn the discursive practices connected to making actionable the ideal academic, into a resource that will increase their value in the eyes of the institution and approximate the ideal (e.g. Skeggs 2004; Skeggs 1997; Acker 2006).

Thirdly, my investigation and data production focused on how the gendered social relations of academic work had been shaped by ruling ways of knowing.
quality and gender mediated by textual standards of evaluating and comparing academic competence. However, my conversations with academics also revealed practices of resistance, practices of doing otherwise, which were not in accordance with ruling ways of knowing or the ideal academic. Other ways of knowing quality and critical political activism was also part of the actuality of many junior female academics I engaged with. Although I have mentioned such findings in my analytical chapters, I have not gone into analytical depth with these. Future research should aim at considering and analysing the limits of textual and ruling standards of quality and gender in order to better understand the gendered social relations.

Fourthly and lastly, my study makes no assertions about the extent to which the social organisation of junior female academics’ lives can be generalised to other contexts. Institutional Ethnography explicitly seeks to account for how ruling and social relations are produced and reproduced in concrete everyday practices from a particular standpoint. It provides a certain theorised practice for illuminating the organisation of everyday life and revealing the generalising effects of ruling relations. With Institutional Ethnography the goal is to test the social, institutional, theoretical and methodological ways of knowing, abstractions, concepts and categories by discovering how and to what extent these are adopted and activated by people in particular contexts, hooking them into translocal relations and sequences of action that do not necessarily work in their interest. It cannot be assumed the effect of these ruling relations is a standardisation of practices across local contexts and positions within the social relations. Making actionable or putting into practice the institutional intentions may equally demand or result in differentiation, and these in turn may look quite different depending on the context of investigation. However, the interest in studying the translocal through the local and in identifying the generalising effects of ruling relations and ruling ways of knowing e.g. gender and quality in local contexts means that my findings will be recognisable to people and potentially transferable to different organisational and national settings. The transferability and recognisability of my analytical findings to empirical sites beyond Aalto, Finland and the European Union is at least partly a result of the very nature of the institutional site and strand of investigation. Higher education and academia is characterised being regulated and measured on standards that are increasingly harmonised/homogenised on national, regional and global levels. Indeed, travelling and presenting my work at international conferences and seminars at universities in Sweden, the UK, the USA, Japan, Denmark and Norway has brought my attention to the recognisability of my findings far beyond the context of my fieldwork. My Institutional Ethnographic inquiry does, in that sense, allow for a certain degree of generalisability. Nonetheless, it just as importantly provides analysis that orients us towards the importance of people’s experiences, interests and practices, producing contextually sensitive knowledge that allows us to transcend and question institutional and dominant ways of knowing, to draw new maps of the social world.
8.2 Gendering the work of becoming an ideal academic

The three analytical chapters contribute in divergent, yet connected, ways to answering the three research questions and ultimately reaching the research objective of explicating the “ideal academic” as gendered social relations. Taking the embodied experiences and everyday practices of junior female scholars as the point of entry, each analytical chapter reveals how social relations of academic work are organised and enacted in a gendered manner. Each chapter unpacks aspects of how the gendered social organisation of academia is (re)produced through the enactment of, seemingly objective and neutral, textually mediated organisational and institutional standards for defining, comparing and evaluating the competence and potential of a given academic and their work. Finally, each chapter explicates how ruling ways of knowing gender and quality organises academics, discursively individualises questions of success/lack of success, downplays hierarchies and inequality, and are activated in ways that reproduce and perhaps strengthen gendered hierarchies and inequalities within changing academia.

The analysis occurred on the level of embodied experience, the level of the, to divergent degrees, standardising texts – the discourses, ideological code of the ideal academic they mediate – and the ways in which the ruling/institutional ways of knowing shape the embodied experience. Junior female academics perform a considerable amount of work that constitutes, directly and indirectly, their position in relation to the ideological code that I have termed ‘the ideal academic’. The ideal academic is a translation of Joan Acker’s (1990) notion of the “ideal worker”, used to analyse work and profit driven work organisations embedded in capitalism, and in heteronormative and patriarchal orders. The translation appears apt within an academic sector increasingly organised by New Public Management, managerialism, neoliberalism and market logic. The ideal academic is constructed in and around the institutional intentions of becoming “world class”, operationalised as appearing on particular international university ranking lists, and the textual complex that makes up a competitive tenure track system as a central strategic management tool for reaching that goal. The strategic texts represent the tenure track system as something everyone can, in principle, enter into as long as they achieve the right merits by acting in accordance to the standardised quality and evaluation criteria: work hard, write good papers, find money and students, learn to teach, remain active in the scientific community, the society and the university. However, most of the junior female academics I spoke to experience a disjuncture between the type of work that gains textual representation as central for achieving organisational goals, and the actual work they perform on a daily basis at the university and in their homes.

The tenure track system of employment introduces a set of internationally standardised, predictable and transparent measures for evaluating and comparing academic competence. These involve evaluation of performance in research, teaching, service and activity within the academic community. However, the main emphasis is placed on measurable and comparable research output in international journals that appear on certain international
journal ranking lists. There can be no recruitment without three publications in such journals. The hope being that this focus will lead to the recruitment of the very best and most competent researchers. Accordingly, the texts in and around the strategic documents and the tenure track system organise which work activities should be emphasised or made visible, and which should be downplayed or made invisible. That which can be defined as a lack or defect, can be translated into an objective for action. Junior female academics engage in evaluating themselves and others in accordance to the criteria and, on this basis, decide which activities they ought to engage in.

The experiences and everyday practices of junior female academics I spoke to, revealed how the tenure track system is not necessarily for everyone. They experience difficulties striking a balance and find that what they “should” do in order to gain eligibility to enter the tenure track is at odds with what they “can” or “want” to do. Firstly, a look at statistical breakdowns made it clear that there exists a gendered division of labour, both at the university and in their homes. Junior female academics take the vast majority of parental leave, are more likely to hold part-time positions and engage in more teaching than their male counterparts, and the higher we travel upwards in the academic hierarchy the lower, in general, the representation of women. Women are, in that way, unfavourably positioned in relation to the textual representations of academic work and what is considered to count. Secondly, these symptoms and divisions of labour are (re)produced in the social relations of academic work, and in the everyday activities at the universities and in the home. Doing gender is an essential part of the everyday work that junior female academics engage in in order to portray themselves as competent.

The tenure systems evaluation criteria takes parental (maternity and paternity) leave into account; the Finnish welfare system generally provides fairly favourable conditions for working parents and a relatively progressive (anti-sexist, anti-racist) and egalitarian attitude exists in the academic communities I studied. It is widely acknowledged that previous career systems were gendered and systematically favoured men above women, and that these are irrational, unenlightened and unacceptable. Gender equality and egalitarianism is treated as an unquestionable part of being Finnish and, indeed, the university’s identity and values, and it has been suggested that this could be used for “branding” the university abroad. However, one must distinguish between political rhetoric and actual everyday (discursive) practices.

Gaining eligibility to activate the excellence discourse connected to the ideal academic requires doing a particular kind of global masculinity discourse, involving geocentrism, careerism and informalism. This discourse is connected to the rhetoric of inevitable participation in global capitalism; the university’s textually encouraged and regulated international orientation regarding recruitment; engagement in market-like behaviour and the adaptation of managerial forms of governance and regulation for comparing and evaluating universities, schools, departments, units and people. The textual complex in and around the university (e.g. websites and various events
hosted by management) form discursive images of the ideal academic as someone willing to sacrifice personal commitments for their work and the organisational goals, and as having an extensive global network of excellent geocentrically likeminded scholars. The English language is naturalised as the working language and it is assumed that all are equally well positioned in terms of mastering it.

The heteronormative order and the relational nature of gender means that masculinities are always defined in contradistinction to some model of femininity. Doing femininity enters as organiser of the invisible and downplayed work: the work that does not gain textual representation but is nonetheless an assumed subtext to the ideal academic. The femininity discourses includes that of caring – caring for one’s family, as well as for colleagues and students’ learning. Both men and women can, and do, activate masculinities and femininities. However, certain stereotypes, or ruling ways of knowing gender, connect certain practices and expectations to certain sex-categorised others and selves. Women are expected to naturally engage in this care work while also covering up traces of it, so that it does not appear to have drawn focus from the so-called significant activities. Women are often faced with a double bind. In order to be considered competent scholars they have to carefully balance both masculinity and femininity. A balance that is more or less impossible to achieve. Furthermore, homosocial rituals through informal networks across the schools mean that older and more experienced men pass on advice and opportunities to the younger and less experienced men. Men and women’s different access to such networks mean that women are in a systematically less favourable position in terms of building the appropriate CV. This does not mean that gender cannot be done differently or otherwise within this context, but the “otherwise” is interpreted against a ruling heteronormative way of knowing gender.

In this context, questions of equality are automatically assumed to be about gender, and equality measures are assumed to predominately target women. While maternity and paternity leaves are taken into account in the texts, and therefore aligned with a progressive self-understanding, these seem to be interpreted and activated in the local in a way that reproduces heteronormative gendered and classed social relations and assumptions. It is expected that women are the ones who will undertake child-care and housework, and that the relative flexibility of academic working life allows for combining career and family. It is taken for granted that independence in terms of structuring one’s working life can, if necessary, be substituted with dependence of a husband. This type of reasoning tends to downplay the fact that the standardised criteria of excellence holding people and departments accountable, also put pressure on the possibility for flexible work environments. More pressure is put on women to choose between family and career.

While is difficult for anyone to live up to the ideal academic (being a virtual, textual, ideological code) it is easier for men than it is for women, which explains the low percentage of women, not only being recruited but also
applying. The ideal academic and the global masculinity connected to the discourse of excellence, is made actionable through a gendered division of labour, both at the university and in the home. Junior female academics and others reproduce this division, in ways that work against their own best interest. The Finnish egalitarian and politically correct gender equality discourse has an important function here. It is activated widely, often also by junior female academics. This is expressed in the insistence that men and women are equally involved in care work responsibilities at home and at the university. The problem with this politically correct self-understanding and discourse is that it works to regulate experiences, individualise, de-politicise, obscure and make invisible the additional work that some people (notably junior female academics) systematically engage in. It contributes to rendering invisible the gendered subtext to the ideal academic; invisible that fact that the position and priorities of the few to make actionable the ideal academic, depends on the position and priorities of the many whose work does not gain textual representation. The politically correct gender equality discourse means that any critique of gender inequality can be discredited and, through this, gender hierarchies in access to the ideal academic are reproduced.

Gaining access to recognition as an ideal academic is not simply a question of what you do, but also of how you go about it. Boasting is another type of textually legitimised, encouraged and coordinated work, which junior female academics must engage in when pursuing the ideal academic and institutional intentions of becoming world class. The work of boasting makes delineates and strengthens the distinction between those who are “on the right track” and those who are not. Boasting suggests the possibility of embodying and making “real” and actionable the unattainable ideological code and virtual reality of the ideal academic. The boasting of some prompts self-evaluation and often self-deprecation in others, as they are reminded that they are not on “the right track”. Boasting is a particular way of presenting oneself, connected to the standardised measures for identifying and comparing competence and potential connected to the ideal academic, which differs from the practices most junior female scholars feel comfortable with. The work of boasting is something they simultaneously embrace and distance themselves from.

While drawing attention to oneself is not a new phenomenon in academia, the rhetoric of inevitable globalisation and participation in global competition and the higher cause of increasing competitiveness, means that the language and work of boasting is increasingly encouraged, accepted and democratised. In an effort to appear distinct from universities and academics around the world drawing on the same standardised measures of excellence and having similar ambitions of becoming world class, the university’s strategic texts encourage the invocation of Finnish strengths and resources. A rather narrow, and strategically well-aligned, definition of Finnish characteristics is proposed as “hard work, perseverance and creativity”, “equality” and “egalitarianism”. It is a notion of Finnishness that is in accordance with neoliberal understandings of the globally oriented, progressively minded, ‘responsibilised’ and optimistic subject with the, more broadly, right attitude of openness, excitement and
celebration of the standards of quality and the changes more generally. Difference among and coherence or uniformity within is textually invoked as central in the effort of becoming “world class”. It is assumed that “Finnishness” is an unproblematic, un-contested and neutral category, and that the culturally particular constitutes a resource that can be converted to value by all.

Boasting is presented textually as something everyone can learn and engage in as long as they have the requisite merits and achievements to boast about. However, boasting in the everyday local setting becomes enmeshed and interconnected with practices of competently doing gender and competently doing Finnishness that are shaped by, if not necessarily fully aligned with, the textual ways of knowing Finnishness or the assumption that people have equal access as long as they have the right merits. Competent boasting in the everyday lives of junior scholars is consequently both a question of knowing what to boast about, and how, where and when to boast about it. A social organisation of boasting arises.

Doing gender is implicated in the textually encouraged work of boasting: the gendered division of labour means that women are not in an equally favourable position to obtain the appropriate merits to boast about. Boasting therefore reproduces inequality. But boasting also reinforces inequality because the standardised measure of quality is coupled with responsibilised individualism and compulsory optimism. Those junior female academics who are not privileged in terms of living up to the standards do not critique the system, but themselves, ultimately attach value to ways of knowing that operate against their own best interest.

Within a heteronormative order involving certain ruling ways of knowing gender, boasting can be considered a particular way of doing masculinity: through aggressively and competitively engaging in the display of one’s “success”, “victories” and scholarly dedication. When women engage in boasting the double bind becomes evident, demanding that they strike an almost impossible balance and avoid being too masculine. Boasting, in this manner, may be taken as a sign of a woman’s incompetence. However, those junior female academics who have successfully achieved merits aligned with the textual standards of quality can activate boasting as a resource to increase their standing, reputation and potential in job and grant applications. The status of textual quality standards as ostensibly being objective and neutral means that they allow women to momentarily escape the double bind that would otherwise threaten to make their boasting, i.e. doing aggressive masculinity, a sign of incompetence. In this way boasting operates together with the standardised measures of quality to reproduce inequality not only between men and women, but also between women and women.

The picture is further complicated by the Finnishness that is institutionally lauded and that, in the texts, operates alongside the global masculinity discourse in a seemingly smooth fashion. However, speaking the dominant codes of Finnishness – propriety, self-control, and honesty – is important for being considered a competent participant in many disciplines within Finnish academia. Although presented as neutral and unproblematic, the dominant
codes of communication, considered typically Finnish, are the result of historical processes and socio-political struggles. People are differently positioned in terms of speaking these codes. The lack of knowing, understanding or articulating them can be a source of exclusion or for deeming someone incompetent. Dominant notions of what Finnishness involves, and what in everyday life is recognised as “typically Finnish”, is, in many respects, not well aligned with boasting or with global masculinity. Boasting can, and is, often seen as an inappropriate activity and language of excess, standing in opposition to the modesty, propriety and self-control valued in Finnish communication. However, the rhetoric of inevitable participation in global capitalism – used to legitimise neoliberal reforms, welfare cutbacks, calls for a more entrepreneurial culture and individualised responsibility as means to secure organisational and national competitiveness – has led to increased acceptance, and, in some circles, direct encouragement of boasting: an encouragement to “be more like the Americans” or “more like the Danes”: encouragement to let go of the “old-fashioned” and “self-deprecating” elements of Finnish culture that leads to “jealousy” and lack of recognition of those individuals who excel.

Boasting can be a resource for increasing the value of certain people, units and schools, who know the Finnish codes of communication and therefore know the circumstances under which boasting can be legitimately activated. If activated in the wrong context or time it may demarcate people, schools or units as being incompetent, as being more concerned with instrumental self-marketing and gamesmanship than with genuine passionate dedication to academic work. If a discipline does not have a long history and is not established and well known for its academic contributions, boasting may not be recognised as legitimate. Those disciplines that are academically established, have a long history and fare well on standardised measures, may not need to engage in aggressive boasting. Within such established disciplines both the nature of boasting and the level with which it is tolerated differs depending on the context in which it is used. If used in funding or job applications it may be more acceptable, as these are often read and evaluated by committees that include members who do not know about the particularities of work or what counts as world class in particular fields. In face-to-face communication, email conversations or other activities between members of the same or related community and discipline, boasting may be considered excessive. Therefore, the competent boaster both critiques and embraces the practice. Those who manage to turn boasting into a resource to increase their value must perform a considerable amount of work to display the boasting as an expression of their optimistic, passionate and authentic dedication. The rewards and recognition that follow may be celebrated, but never as an end in themselves. Passion is presented as something we all have access to finding.

This led to investigating how being moved by love or passion is related with ruling ways of knowing quality and gender. Junior female academics related the disjuncture they experienced between producing knowledge that counts
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(gains textual representation in quality evaluations), and telling a story that is truly exciting, challenges existing knowledge and that does not necessarily conflict with finding time for teaching colleagues, friends and family. Many experienced that they had to make a considerable effort to strike a balance between these two motivations. In some cases, however, the motivations were not experienced as contradictory. Exploring this work allowed me to explicate how the two motivations, embedded and shaped in a complex of ruling relations of quality and gender and discourses of love, impact upon each other so that people end up actually wishing or wanting to do, what they should do.

The ruling relations of quality imply that the appearance in an A-journal on a specific international ranking lists signals the highest possible quality standards and that the manuscript has gone through the best possible review process before publication. Disciplinary attitudes towards standardised measures of quality and excellence differ on at least three connected levels: firstly, there is disagreement as to whether excellence does, in fact, exist; secondly, what defines excellence; and thirdly, whether excellence is believed to be located within the object of evaluation, or in the eye of the beholder and inter-subjective negotiations. Differences in attitude towards the question of excellence are partly a result of the epistemic commitments defining a given discipline. It is possible to roughly distinguish between those who subscribe to a belief that it is possible to deem someone or something objectively excellent if the right methods for measurement have been utilised and those who consider evaluation a process that always involves an exercise of power. In this latter position the particular standards of evaluation have achieved status as if they were neutral and objective. What is considered excellent and how it can be evaluated will also differ in accordance to whether a discipline or academic subscribes to constructivist, comprehensive, positivist or utilitarian epistemology.

The standardised measure of quality connected to the journal ranking lists has a particular historical and disciplinary origin. It emerged from post-WWII US natural sciences, and first began entering other fields and disciplines with the OECD recommendations and EU standardisation policies in the late 1990s. Bibliometrics and impact factor indexes and other measures of quality where created to compare people, publications, departments, schools and universities that had otherwise been incomparable. The ranking lists and bibliometrics are largely recognised as representing reality in a transparent and objective manner. However, the lists and measurement standards conceal ruling epistemic positions and epistemic conflicts, and the interests they operate in favour of. The journals represented on the ranking lists deemed significant, with a few exceptions, are US based and favour particular types of research; particular language and ways of writing; and particular kinds of references and data. They reproduce the core-periphery relations. Furthermore, there is an epistemic dimension connected to the neoliberal and New Public management style ranking listed journals and bibliometrics. The emphasis is placed on marketable/citable, measurable and comparable knowledge production, more easily related with positivist and utilitarian
epistemologies. These standards pose a threat to epistemic diversity by marginalising and downplaying comprehensive and constructivist epistemic styles. The ranking lists and journal articles that count are not neutral or objective measures of quality, but favour particular types of research. However, the link between the standardised list and the status granted particular epistemic styles is downplayed in order to maintain a discursive framing of academia and the university as a place concerned with knowledge production, rather than its status on a global ranking list.

Problematising this from the standpoint of junior female academics is, since I have no wish to make essentialising claims such as: women are less interested than men in doing the kind of research that is represented in the ranking listed journals, not straightforward. However, the ruling relations of love, are connected to a masculine order and to doing gender. People reproduce ruling ways of knowing quality through discourses of love that do not necessarily work in their own best interest. When junior female academics and others spoke about their experiences of changes in their working life, they often invoked nostalgia. They spoke of the time before the reforms as a time when people could really work and be motivated by doing the things they loved and found meaningful. This appears exaggerated: the past, too, saw its problems, inequalities and very few people were privileged to work with what truly compelled them. The nostalgic plot structure invokes an interpretive frame that draws attention to the tensions of today, more than it reveals any underlying truths about the past. The stories drew attention to how “playing the publishing game” was in opposition to being driven by love, veracity and moral commitment. How we ascribe value to something as being loveable is shaped within social and ruling relations. Being recognised as an ideal academic involves being recognised for what one claims to love, but also of how one loves it. The expression of personal dedication must go beyond instrumental concerns for rewards. The academic must display the right attitude, an attitude of really wanting something in accordance to the standardised definitions of quality. However, in order for love to mitigate the link between standardised measures of quality and epistemic streamlining it must be a particular kind of love. In the documents and texts considered of significance at the university, as well as in the talk of my participants, I identified two discourses of love: love as passion and love as care.

The call for passion driven research is central and connected to a neoliberal ‘responsibilised’ self that makes invisible how people are differently positioned within the social relations in terms of practising passion as well as the ‘responsibilised’ self. The discourse of passion would have that we need not take any account of material and social conditions, since passionate love for someone or something is supposed to conquer all, transcend material constraints and lift us above the mundane. The passion is compulsory: whatever drives us it must never be locatable in the institutions and structures, but in individual preferences, attitudes and feelings. The coordinating power of passion flows from spaces in between the institutional and material texts that organise the experiences of junior female academics. For indeed, the
organising power of passion is intensified the second that explicit communication ends. The responsibilised individual is able to predict the needs of the university, internalise its situation, goals and visions without having to be explicitly asked to do so. Any overt request would highlight the existence of a power relation, that as such stands in contradiction to “authentic” dedication and it would highlight the effect that standardised measures of quality have on knowledge production. How common goals and common visions came about is mystified through the individualisation of passion. Junior female academics must themselves engage in work to draw on other texts within the intertextual complex to reveal what they are supposed to feel passionate about.

The discourse of passion is closely connected to notions of “the free spirit” associated with academic work. The academic is free from external pressure, free to travel the world of ideas, only claiming alliance to the very highest ethical, philosophical and research standards and never restricted by the local ways of knowing, or mundane everyday concerns. The academic is willing to let themselves be “taken away from home”, both literally, in terms of spending time abroad, and in a transferred sense, in terms of being readily willing to exchange locally fostered commitments for better and truly “world-class” ways of knowing and producing quality.

The discourse of care can be distinguished from that of passion in that it is concerned with the material and social underpinnings. Care takes its point of departure in everyday local ways of knowing and involves a concern for others and oneself as needs arise in the local and immediate. “Caring” and “sharing” is emphasised in the texts as central for the university’s success story. By discursively framing the university as a place that encourages and is concerned with collegiality and care for colleagues and students, the competitive individuality that follows from the ambition of becoming ideal academics and “world class” can be downplayed. However, what is also downplayed is that care work is neither equally distributed nor rewarded. Activating the caring discourse involves simultaneous idealisation and downplaying. Idealised because it is recognised as a foundational productive force in academia, downplayed because, depending on who performs it and which aspects of care we speak about, a great deal of it is often taken for granted and made invisible. The kind of care that is highlighted in the texts, and in discursive images of the ideal academic, is that which supports the development of a “culture” of passion and ultimately contributes to making actionable the institutional intentions of the university. Both men and women engage in care work and in activating the care discourse, yet, given the gendered division of labour and given the ruling ways of knowing gender, women’s engagement in such activities are often naturalised by themselves and by others, and therefore becomes untraceable until the very second they are perceived as lacking. When men, in contrast, do it is treated as work that is applauded and recognised. In that way women’s care work is made exploitable in the interest of becoming world class.
In order to accomplish the right merits, display future potential and low investment risk, junior female academics and others often find themselves making decisions throughout the review process that make the final manuscript look entirely different from the original. The ‘responsibilised’ individual, and ideal academic, is able and willing to detach herself from local responsibilities and local ways of knowing quality. This detachment has consequences for knowledge production. Although no manuscript review process in ever fully standardised, but involves struggles and negotiations, the academics I spoke to, at all levels of the hierarchy, share the experience that competent participation in the review processes of journals that count involves being “taken away from home” and away from the epistemic, ontological, theoretical, methodological and other commitments fostered there. It involves being lifted above the mundane, above material and social constraints, and restricted local ways of knowing, to a supposedly more distinguished standard of quality. Practising passion is in this way connected to practising the geocentric global masculinity. It involves willingness to reshape individual commitments in the name of ruling ways of knowing quality. The competent academic is able to argue soberly when a particular review comment seems irrelevant: should be able to identify with the perspective of the reviewer before rejecting his/her comments. The reviewer’s irrelevant comment can be rationalised and legitimised as a result of his or her epistemic or methodological commitments; but the reviewer is not, in turn, held accountable to the commitments of the author when providing comments. This reproduces a hierarchical relation between ways of knowing and doing research: one having to justify itself against a way of knowing treated as being the standard. Any refusal to incorporate the comment of the reviewer can, from this perspective, be framed as a sign of the authors’ inability to control her emotions rather than a sign of epistemic commitments. In this manner, the conflict is transferred from something that arises between diverging epistemic and paradigmatic positions within the social relations of academic work, to the individual author’s attitude.

The connection between the ruling ways of knowing quality and the status granted particular epistemic commitments, is discursively downplayed through the discourses of love as passion and love as care. The university can be discursively framed as a place more concerned with knowledge than with its place on a global ranking list. The feminised love as care and the global masculinity discourse connected to love as passion contributes to reproducing gendered division of labour and a social organisation of academic work that works for the few but not the many, and reproduces gender inequality.

People are not overruled by ruling relations, but rather shaped by them. Sometimes people buy into them, sometimes they act in accordance, yet without buying into them, and at other times they actively resist them. The same person will generally engage in all three at different times and on different occasions. In the end, however, people are held accountable socially as well as materially. New Public Management styles of measuring the productivity of individuals, departments, schools and universities provide the
basis for basic funding allocation, decisions and possibilities for hiring or dismissing academic staff. It has concrete consequences for junior female academics’ possibilities for a position if they do not live up to the textual requirements.

In answering my research questions, the ambition has been to unpack gender in academia as social relations. I have aimed at illuminating the gendered social relation of the ideal academic as constructed in changing academia. In doing so I write myself into feminist scholarship on gender in organisations and academia.

I have problematized the objectification that occurs through ruling ways of knowing quality that ultimately places responsibility for success or its lack on the individual. I have suggested how gendered social relations in changing academia, related to making actionable the ideal academic and the institutional intentions of becoming world class, can be opened up in order to take the rhetoric of inevitable globalisation and the changing nature of capitalism, work and academia into account.

The Liberal feminist demand for women and men to have equal opportunities in the labour market has in contemporary capitalism been co-opted by some and transformed to a type of corporate feminism. Members of the corporate and political elite and large international organisations promote women’s equal opportunity to compete as an important step in maintaining or furthering a given organisation’s and country’s competitive position (e.g. Eisenstein 2009). The Postmodern feminists critiqued the Socialist ones for with their focus on gender inequality as arising with large institutions of capitalism and patriarchy, observing that the Socialist feminists, by not attending to differences between women, and between men, and in calling for large scale political and structural solutions oriented towards women as a coherent group, in fact participated in a discursive reproduction of women’s subordinate position to men and of gender inequality. Postmodern feminists instead offered critique of cultural sexism and a focus on the discursive micro-processes that reproduce gender inequality. The postmodern feminist approach has, in many ways, been co-opted by neoliberalism (e.g. Fraser 2013), to aid the neoliberal critique of the “nanny state”, favour of individual solutions, and downplay the critique of capitalism. The capitalist and neoliberal co-option of feminist agendas have been used to delegitimise critique of gender inequality as a larger social, structural, systemic issue connected to capitalism. Moreover, they have been used in support of standardised measures and ruling ways of knowing and evaluating quality that are seen as progressive and claimed as a means of overcoming the sexism of the past. By developing a research approach that draws on Institutional Ethnography I have illuminated the ways in which social relations of gender at the micro/local levels, that may take different shapes and forms, are locked into translocal/macro processes and ruling relations that have generalising effects across local sites. In this way Institutional Ethnography provides a way of overcoming the shortcomings of both Postmodern and Socialist feminism.

In my empirical exploration of academia and the ideal academic I have
demonstrated how these are influenced and shaped within larger processes of contemporary capitalism. Affect, attitude and emotions are increasingly involved in evaluating people’s competence and potential at work (Adkins 2008; Adkins & Jokinen 2008). Making actionable the ideal academic and the institutional intention of becoming world class is not only a question of accumulating merit in accordance to standardised quality criteria, but also of conveying future potential and the right attitude. It is not just a question of what you do (or are able to do), but also how, where and when you do it; and it is a question of indicating that you want to do what you should do. Understanding the gendered social relations in academia involves more than tracing sexual divisions of labour that constitutes men as men and women as women and differently in terms of gathering merit. Gender inequality and homosociality (Holgersson 2012) in academia and elsewhere take increasingly complex forms with the rise of global masculinities (Connell 1998) and the feminisation of labour and the labour market (see e.g. Adkins 2005). My approach to gender as relational – understanding it as something people actively engage in doing under certain conditions of possibility (restricting and enabling them) – allows me to capture how both men and women can engage in doing femininity and masculinity, but also how they are held accountable to ruling ways of knowing gender. In explicating the work of doing gender I attended to differences between women and men, women and women. People are divergently positioned within the social relations in terms of converting particular discourses and ruling ways of knowing quality and gender into a resource for making actionable the ideal academic. They are differently positioned in terms of gathering merits and being recognised as legitimately activating discourses of excellence and in using particular affects as a resource.

8.3 Class relations and changing academia

Institutional Ethnography has helped me chart local processes as social relations shaped by textually mediated translocal ruling relations. When the virtual institutional reality of the specialised texts – that are themselves part of an intertextual complex – are encountered and enacted within a particular local setting, disjunctures between the actualities of everyday life and the textual representation of it are revealed. The disjuncture is when entering it from a particular standpoint, experience and problematic, explicated in a particular way. Other stories and other subject standpoints within the social relations may have opened up diverging or overlapping critiques, and may have oriented me towards different kinds of work, ones that are made invisible or downplayed in the texts.

In the course of my research and thesis work I have come across the ways in which ruling ways of knowing quality and gender, not only organise the lives of junior female academics along social relations of gender, but also social relations of class. In making actionable the ideological code of the ideal academic people engage in the work of doing gender, doing excellence, doing boasting, doing Finnishness, doing quality and doing love in connection with a responsibilised self with the right attitude. These practices are organised along
classed ways of knowing, and reproduce the privileged position of the middle-class. Particular notions of respectability, criticality, individuality, independence, reflexivity, progressiveness, propriety and academic capital in academia are a product of and (re)producer of middle class ways of knowing and values in that setting (Bourdieu 1984): doing Finnishness (Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013) and gender competently involves doing middle class. The work of boasting, at the level of the individual or an organisation, can be argued to be a form of working class excessiveness (see e.g. Skeggs 1997; Skeggs 2004), a sign of incompetence. However, those who have managed to establish themselves as respectable in accordance to middle-class values can appropriate the “working class” practices and use them as resource to increase their value. Doing this can be rhetorically or discursively framed as a manner of learning from other cultures, e.g. “being less Finnish”. Participation in global competitive capitalism – rhetorically positioned as inevitable for national or organisational survival – has been followed by the replacement of questions of class difference with individualistic notions of cultural differences. Downplaying national and global class differences plays a role in legitimising welfare cuts and more competitive global labour market.

My future research would include the exploration of classed social relations to understand how they work in accordance with gendered social relations in changing academia.

8.4 Resisting ruling ways of knowing

The focus of this doctoral thesis was on understanding how ruling ways of knowing gender and quality shape (that is, not determine or overrule) social relations of academic work in changing academia, and how these where involved in making actionable the ideal academic. My empirical investigations also brought my attention to acts of resisting such ruling ways of knowing. Using irony and taking critical distance to the higher educational reforms, changing academia, capitalism, competition, the “excellence vocabulary”, notions of competence in the tenure track system and the good scholar all play a significant role positioning oneself as a competent critical scholar, and many of the junior female academics I spoke to were openly critical.

An anonymous blogger collective named Tiina Tutkija (Tiina the Researcher) would make several critical posts, using an ironic undertone that may be lost in the translation into English. I knew their identity because they contacted me via email on the blog launching day and gave me a link. I met with one of them to speak of their blog entry Extreme Makeover:

**Rebecca:** I wonder whether you can tell me a bit more about what you actually put in the blog ...I recall this document you were talking about "going from loser to world class"

**Tiina Tutkija:** yeah! Extreme Makeover ...I think it's one of our best texts ...

**Rebecca:** can you tell me a bit about how that goes
Tiina Tutkija: I have made like 100 texts ...so
Rebecca: I will get my computer [small break] ...Okay ...so here we have your blog...
Tiina Tutkija: 26 texts in February 23 in March
Rebecca: okay you have been very active
Tiina Tutkija: let’s see, I think it’s here ...it says [she translates from Finnish] “this blog offers a very exceptional opportunity to follow an extreme makeover ...this is how you make top notch the Toimi Tuhertaja [a fictional character whose name signals that he is trivial and does insignificant things]. Toimi Tuhertaja is a doctor in science and has been on temporary employment contracts for as long as he can remember. He is very sympathetic and his colleagues value him. He is very much into his work. He specialises is the history of some absurd stuff ...something that does not have direct use-value. His students love him, he is critical and blah blah blah. He has been participating in international research but in very narrow fields and he has written a lot in Finnish...but he has a problem because he is not considered eligible for a Top University and they are not going to renew his employment contract and therefore he has signed up for the “From Average to Top Notch training”...to make a top scholar out of him. So we will interview him and his coach Veli Valmentajaa...Veli is a male name and it means 'brother' ...and Valmentajaa means ‘coach’ ... his Brother Coach [referring to homosocial networking]. So we ask the Veli Valmentajaa what the main issues in this make over are ... and he replies "[...] Toimi is too old so we have to cut down his age by 20 years and we have to do something about his Finnishness as well...because brains [from] outside Finland are much wiser ...and we have contacts so that we can provide him with a double citizenship in some nation state that is big in research ...his profile will become more promising ...we don’t have to do a gender change because he is already a man ...and the probability that this great makeover process will be cancelled due to pregnancy is of course really low...and then there are four modules he will participate in ...which is ‘mastering networks’, ‘going to the Gym’ to become fit and then ‘publishing’ and ‘optimizing your teaching”’ ...And then we move on to speaking to Toimi about his experiences and stuff he has learned. He tells us how he has realised that he had lost track of the development and that his hitherto specialisation and narrow interests in history are irrelevant. He has realised that you have to think outside the box and make new innovations and blah blah blah. On the basis of this he knows that his main problem was that he had only been publishing in journals that are less than impact factor ‘1’ and that his publications in Finnish journals are bad for his career and therefore should be removed from his CV. Then we talk to Toimi about his Gym module and he explains how international researchers and corporate executives have to be fit marathon men and heterosexuals with nice wives ...if you look fat then it means that you are enjoying life to much, like the French, which is bad and decreases you gross national value and impact factor ...

Using irony is a powerful act of resistance because it reveals tensions and struggles inherent in a mode of evaluation that claims to be neutral and unbiased. Finding language and resources to engage in critique and resistance were often acquired from critical courses or engagement with critical literature,
and, in certain cases, involved having read my publications. Moreover, the disciplinary contexts that I focused my fieldwork on are characterised by a reasonably good numerical representation of women among the faculty. There was, in these disciplines, also a history of engaging with gender research and, to some extent, feminist literature. This is part of the social relations that have shaped these critical junior female academics. Findings, standpoints and ‘doing otherwise’ may have been quite different if I had conducted the majority of my fieldwork in one of the other schools.

Many people I spoke to, as I have already suggested, had alternative standards of quality: e.g. involving writing in Finnish, writing books rather than articles, performing interdisciplinary and critical research, focusing on teaching development and care for student learning: doing research that makes a difference for people in their everyday lives, and has an impact beyond academia. Ways of knowing excellence and quality that did not fit well with the textual standards promoted in and around the strategic management system. Despite the existence of alternatives and concrete practices of resistance, and despite the fact that Tiina Tutkija received a lot of praise by scholars, people, units, departments, schools and universities are, it seems, ultimately held accountable to textual ways of knowing. In future research it would be interesting to investigate the spaces for resistance in more depth. To study the effect that acts of resistance have on the local community and on the possibility for undoing the institutional ways of knowing therein. Just as it is important to understand the power of the ruling texts and standards to shape the local, it is also important to understand their limits in order to further explore the social relations.
### Appendices

#### Appendix 1: example of interview guide for professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background: parents, schools, education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current family situation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Job situation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More detailed description of the particular event that caused me to ask her for an interview</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe a normal day/night (e.g. yesterday), from when you get up until you go to bed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the type of work you are involved in, e.g. by looking at your calendar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has she/he experienced changes in her/his department and in her everyday working life in academia</th>
<th>When and how did she notice changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did the changes show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has the changes affected her community and her relation to PhD students, project researchers, students, colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and to what extent have the changes affected her work priorities and daily schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How does she manage to balance home/university; does she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has he/she ever experienced his/her own (or PhD students, colleagues) gender (and/or other) to be an issue in academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How does she/he evaluate herself; how does she feel about her/his opportunities in academia; the opportunities of her/his more junior colleagues and PhD students | Does she feel that she can live up to the expectations; would she/he want a tenure track position (does she/he already have one?)

Why/why not?

What are the standards she/he uses to decide the quality of her own work/the work of PhD students/project researchers

How and where did she/he learn about these standards/expectations she uses to evaluate herself/himself, her/his opportunities and the opportunities/potential of colleagues/junior colleagues/PhD students

References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. strategy; email conversations; indirectly/directly via seminars and meetings and committee work; the tenure track evaluation criteria)

How did she/he learn about this

When and where did she first come across this text

How and to what extent do these standards have an effect on her/him, and the department/community

References to discourses (e.g. gender; excellence; the politically correct discourse of gender egalitarian/gender equal division of labour)

How and to what extent does the discourse “speak” her/his own embodied experience/actuality

How, why and to what extent does she/he question the discourse

Appendix 2: example of interview guide for managers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background: parents, schools, education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current family situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Job situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe a normal work day/night [e.g. yesterday], from when you get up until you go to bed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of her/his manager position and responsibilities as manager on a daily/weekly/monthly/annual basis; who does she/he report to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the type of work you are involved in as a manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the department/school/university and in her/his everyday work as a manager</td>
<td>What would she/he describe as the main changes happening in the department/school/the university following the merger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is her/his role in implementing these changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does she/he manage the concrete implementation of the strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does it work structurally; who is she/he accountable to and how does it happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would she/he say that there are challenges related to the implementation; which challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has the changes affected her/his work and relation to the local academic community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does she/he manage to balance home/university; does she?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is her/his position on securing equality e.g. in recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the standards by which she/he evaluates whether her work as a manager, securing the implementation of the strategy, is successful or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. strategic texts; committee meetings that draw on texts; meetings with Dean or Rector who oversees implementation of strategy; the tenure track evaluation criteria)</td>
<td>How did she learn about this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When and where did she first come across this text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and to what extent do these standards have an effect on her/his work, and the department/school/university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| References to discourses (e.g. gender; excellence; the politically correct discourse of gender egalitarian/gender equal division of labour) | How and to what extent does the discourse “speak” her/his experience of academia  
How, why and to what extent does she/he question the discourse |
| --- | --- |

**Appendix 3: example of interview guide for administrative personnel**

| Introduction | Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children  
Current Job: describe position and responsibilities,  
Who does she report to and how does that work  
Describe a normal work day/night [e.g. yesterday], from when you get up until you go to bed |
| --- | --- |
| Changes in the department/school/university and in her/his everyday work | What would she/he describe as changes happening in the department/school/the university  
And what is her/his role in these changes  
Who does she/he interact with (e.g. scholars, managers, other administrative personnel) and about what  
Would she/he say that there are challenges related to her/his work; which challenges  
What are the standards by which she/he evaluates whether her/his work is sufficiently well or not |
| References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. the type of calculative systems that are used in budget planning; texts that define the factors on the basis of which funding is allocated; meetings with managers, the Dean or Rector who e.g. interferes with budget allocation) | How did she/he learn about this  
When and where did she/he first come across this text  
How and to what extent do these shape her/his work at the department/school/university |
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Rebecca W.B. Lund "Doing the “Ideal” academic: gender, excellence and changing academia


Li & Rankin 20122.


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