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Management and Gender in Higher Education by Pat
O'Connor

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Pat O'Connor. *Management and Gender in Higher Education*. Manchester, England: Oxford University Press, 2014. 224 pp. Hardcover: \$100.00. ISBN: 978-0-7190-8358-7.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN MARINE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR, HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY, MERRIMACK COLLEGE

How does gender function in university contexts beyond the United States? What can be learned from other nations' gendered educational practices (and policies) that might advance or inhibit the goal of equity? These and other questions are compellingly (if indirectly) taken up in Pat O'Connor's book, *Management and Gender in Higher Education*. This book examines the recent evolution of higher education in Ireland, with a particular focus on the last 20 years, and with attention to the ways in which this evolution has been characterized by gendered practices. Drawing a correlation to U.S. trends during the 'era of transformation,' (Peterson, 2007) and grounding her examination specifically in what is termed the "Celtic Tiger" period (1997-2007), O'Connor names forces shaping the landscape for postsecondary education from a public to a private good during this period. These trends include a rapid increase in diversity of students, increasing demands for education to bolster the nation's economic productivity, shifts in delivery of post-secondary education, and a decline in funding from the state. Such trends are depressingly familiar to readers in the U.S. and in most Western economies and signal a larger trend across democratic institutions that hasten both solace and anxiety.

In the book's first chapter, O'Connor explores the ways in which these convergent factors have also shaped the rapid growth of university access in Ireland, with just over 65% of the population now qualifying for some form of college (a ten-fold increase since the 1960s). Like the U.S., Ireland's binary system of four-year state universities and two year Institutes of Technology ensures that

there is a place for virtually everyone, yet she notes the impact of offering (nearly) universal higher education has not been considered by scholars to date. Signaling the gendered nature of these shifts, O'Connor names the discourses ensuing about whether such massification is inciting a "moral panic" within the United Kingdom, where "girls' high educational achievements pose challenges to a society which purports to be meritocratic but where all main institutional structures remain male dominated" (p. 18). The effects are considerable: women currently represent the largest ranks at the staff level and comprise more than 50% of students but make up only one-fifth of senior management and full professor positions in Ireland. As of the date of this book's publication, not a single university in Ireland is led by a woman.

In the second chapter of the book, the author "finds a compass and maps a terrain" (p. 29), further unpacking the varied conceptual frameworks for the operation of gender within this neoliberal landscape. Acknowledging that gender is contextual and factors differently within different national and institutional backdrops, O'Connor examines the different systemic discourses circulating within Irish higher education. This includes expressions of private vs. public patriarchy, masculinist norms of managerialism, and the tensions between these managerialist norms and the values inherent in European academic culture. O'Connor points to theories of collegiality to more meaningfully level the playing field for women's advancement in senior leadership roles in Irish higher education. She proceeds to frame the study methodology as a critical realist mixed methods approach of quantifying the numbers of senior managers in Irish higher education by gender and conducting semi-structured interviews of both men and women in senior management roles to examine the extent to which aspects of neo-liberally conceived managerial norms dictate the operation of leadership at these universities. Finally, she conducted a content analysis of key documents that serve to define the policy context for senior managers in Ireland. Perhaps counter-intuitively, Chapter 3 leads off with the policy analysis exercise, whereby the author examines the Higher Education Authority's work in three specific domains: instrumentality (the process and procedure of policy making), scientization (the prioritizing of research related to science and technology), and "those [actions] related to degendering i.e. focusing on the extent and nature of a concern with gender" (p. 47). O'Connor argues that the same forces shaping higher education outlined in the first chapter led to an uptick in 'quality assurance procedures' in Irish post-secondary education, at a significant cost to universities (and resulting in a decrease in funds available for instruction), without apparent

concern for the benefits or costs of doing so. At the same time, a shift in focus to research lines that can be commodified (e.g., in science and technology), research that by all accounts is disproportionately conducted by men, “has been particularly driven by overlapping, state funded advocacy structures outside higher education, with no attempt to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of other systems of investment” (p. 56).

Finally, she maintains that the Irish government’s “total inability to understand the nature of discrimination” (p. 6) has resulted in policy formation that disregards gender, despite the EU’s strong assertion that all programs receiving structural funds were obligated to analyze the operations of these programs through a gendered lens. The so-called Equality Authority, established in 1999 to attend to issues of gender inequality in national policy-making, experienced a 42% budget cut in 2008, revealing the lack of commitment to this endeavor among chief policy makers. O’Connor surmises that “although member states were exhorted to...increase the participation of women in decision making...there were no penalties for doing so” (p. 61).

Chapter 4 includes both numerical reporting and analysis of the quantitative data regarding the numbering of men and women in senior management roles. Positing that such processes can function either collegially (as a “gentleman’s club”) or what O’Connor typified as more managerial processes (as a “medieval court”), she lands on the latter in reference to current trends in Ireland. Women are equally represented at the lower (lecturer) levels of instruction, yet as one moves up the power ladder, women are represented in smaller and smaller numbers. Executive deans and vice-president level positions are appointed by Presidents, reproducing inequality through self-referential ‘cloning’ (p. 71). Presidents are appointed for a term of ten years by a search committee, typically composed of knowledgeable influence-bearers, whose longevity at each institution thus renders them disproportionately male. Contrasting academic and non-academic managers, who are appointed for limited terms and largely dictated by Presidential favor, O’Connor found that in the case of the former, conscious distancing from inequitable and capricious power operations was the norm, unlike the mostly male academic managers, who appeared to favor discourses (but not practices) of collegiality.

In the final (and most compellingly-written) three chapters, five through seven, O’Connor mines the data culled from qualitative interviews conducted with 34 men and women serving as senior managers in higher education in Ireland. Chapter 5 focuses on participants’ ideas about why so few senior managers are women; unsurprisingly, women were more able to recognize and name structural

impediments to women’s advancement than men, though some men “saw the continued existence of a male dominated organizational culture as legally and morally unacceptable” (p. 107). Explanations offered for women’s lack of access to senior roles included poor planning, low ambition, poor self-esteem, and “lifestyle choices,” and while some concern about inequity was expressed, O’Connor found “no real commitment to fundamental change among managers in this study” (p. 108).

Chapter 6 explores whether the qualities associated with strong leadership in Ireland’s university presidencies are gendered, as well as whether management styles more broadly are so. Male embodiment and disciplinary background were not viewed as critical to assuming the office of President. Qualities deemed important for presidential leadership included consensus-based decision-making, the ability to listen effectively, and the ability to persuade others toward the enactment of a common vision. O’Connor noted that none of these attributes were viewed as gendered qualities (though they arguably are associated with female leadership), nor were they extended as rationale for questioning the lack of women at the senior leader level.

Chapter 7 investigates senior managers’ experiences with the role, both in terms of challenges and rewards and the extent to which daily “interactional contexts” (p. 129) are visibly gendered. While many shared challenges were revealed—lack of resources and time, putting one’s teaching and scholarship on hold—a noticeable distinction arose between men and women’s perceptions of the rewards of the jobs, with men heralding their ability to influence change, and women, their ability to mentor junior leaders. Women were more conscious of their gender and more confident that they were perceived more positively by other women; in line with similar discourses in other scholars’ work (Acker, 1990), men saw their gender as negligible or invisible. In the final chapter, O’Connor outlines the implications of her study as raising important questions about the hidden costs of the managerial transformation of Irish universities and the pernicious obliviousness of men in leadership roles to questions of gendered inequity. She ends on the bleak note of naming the uphill battle of dismantling—or rather, simply questioning—these strongholds of belief, policy, and practice in the current market-driven backdrop of Irish higher education.

While engaging in its style and approach, and exceptionally thorough in its examination of the effects that inequality of gender has had on Western democratic higher education, this excellent book represents a common quandary in work on gender in post-secondary education. While our methods of exploring and analyzing how gender both overtly

and insidiously functions to disempower people of some genders over others have become increasingly complex, layered, and sophisticated, our ability to translate those findings into actionable change remain vague and thus, by extension, relatively impotent. O'Connor's foundational premise—that gender operates within higher education in tandem with other significant forces that have the current upper hand in shaping policy and practice—is suffused with the sense that our ability to enact remediation is obscured by these forces' power. Nowhere is this more true than when these forces are operating to reify existing binary systems.

Examining the intersection of numerical data reflecting the gender identities of senior post-secondary management in Ireland alongside their narratives of experience, while also applying a keen critical eye to current state and EU policy, O'Connor's work reflects a commitment to revealing the multi-level nature of institutionalized gender as it is practiced within one particular setting. O'Connor's depth and breadth of analysis is commendable, and provides a clear sense of the deeply ingrained disconnects between discursive exhortations of equity in the absence of meaningful accountability. Including both men and women in the qualitative aspect of her study allowed for nuances of understanding about managers' rewards and challenges, along with awareness and ignorance, to emerge in greater dimension. O'Connor's data, and her skillful analysis of it, reveals that benign inaction, and power-holders' lack of reflection on habitual practices, are more to blame for the absence of women from senior roles than active or aggressive exclusion. However, her commentary upon these effects is more measured than seems appropriate to the barriers they imply for women aspiring to rise to levels of leadership in Irish universities, noting that these findings "raise issues about cultural colonization" (p. 163). This hardly seems like a clarion call for change, let alone an indictment. Indicative of the quandary that all gender researchers face, O'Connor's work reminds us that in the absence of overtly expressed discrimination, we may struggle to legitimately 'name' (and condemn) the problem when it reveals itself to be a process in which we ourselves participate, and from which we have benefited. O'Connor's ownership of her 'inside/outsider' positionality as a senior manager in an Irish university undoubtedly lends gravitas to her ability to weigh in on these matters.

While the book is undoubtedly useful to those seeking to better understand the intersecting nature of gender and neoliberal, managerial practices in higher education in a Western context, certain aspects of the study reveal limitations for cross-national applicability. First, while O'Connor names and briefly explores the importance of intersectional theory in Chapter 1 of the text, she does

not resume analysis of intersectionality of identity among her study participants in later chapters, avoiding explorations of questions of race, sexuality, social class, and (dis)ability in the experiences of her participants, among other potentially salient identity markers. While this could be attributed to the unavoidable homogeneity of her sample—perhaps indeed of any sample of senior managers in Ireland—this should be explicitly stated. Notable also is O'Connor's exclusive use of and reference to gender in the binary. She acknowledges when this ceases to be an adequate frame of analysis for times when men are enacting ally behaviors toward women, but does not acknowledge that the frame itself is inadequate, given the highly visible emergence of trans* and other non-binary identified individuals and communities across the globe, including in Ireland.

Finally, returning to the question of solutions to the insidiousness of gender inequity in the Irish context, O'Connor's exceptionally insightful analysis sets readers up for a number of policy and practice implications that could be more thoroughly examined and espoused in the book. Far from being "an esoteric and elite pursuit" (p. 163), O'Connor's work points the way to the urgent need for advancing women's participation in higher education leadership in Ireland, at a time when policy is being set that will shape the prospects of Irish people for decades to come. Two specific outcomes follow logically from this study: 1) a renewed call for promotion of (and accountability to) an equity agenda in the EU (Ireland specifically), and 2) potential for increased public pressure to review the process of academic and presidential appointments and term limits at Irish universities. Both responses would seem to be feasible and actionable pursuits for feminists of all genders in Ireland and emanate directly from O'Connor's work. Additionally, decoupling the narratives of women who have succeeded in academic administration from those of their male counterparts—the voices of whom are well-represented in the pages of Chapters 4 through 6—to identify their specific strategies for success would enable more meaningful mentoring of women 'coming up the pipeline,' even as systemic change is ardently pursued. Feminist research is, by definition, typified by action for change. O'Connor's personal experience, and the experiences of participants in her study, can certainly provide the catalytic insights essential for fomenting real and lasting change in Ireland and perhaps, by extension, in other neoliberal-constituted systems of post-secondary education across the globe. It remains to be seen whether concerted feminist efforts will be any match for the pounce of the Celtic Tiger's market-driven ethos, but using O'Connor's work to guide the way is a promising start.

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John D. Shank. *Interactive Open Educational Resources: A Guide to Finding, Choosing, and Using What's Out There to Transform College Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014. 176 pp. Paperback: \$40.00. ISBN: 978-1-118-27745-4.

REVIEWED BY SARAH L. RODRIGUEZ, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

In his book, John D. Shank explores the world of interactive open educational resources (OERs) by examining several of the most popular and highest quality digital repositories and library websites in depth in order to guide his audience towards best practices for utilizing these resources in the context of today's classroom. Sponsored by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), this book provides a comprehensive look at the importance of interactive learning materials to the learning process as well as a step-by-step approach on how to explore, select, and integrate these resources into the learning process. Shank, the founding director of the Center for Learning & Teaching at Penn State Berks, contends within his book that interactive learning materials can be a useful tool not only to enhance the learning environment but also as a way to improve the interaction that students have with peers and instructors.

The book is divided into three main sections that address the nature of interactive learning materials, explore the process of finding these resources, and, finally, discuss how to select and utilize such resources. The book closes with a thoughtful epilogue regarding the role of interactive learning materials in the future transformation of higher education learning.

In Part 1, Shank focuses on setting the stage for understanding the importance of interactive learning materials and how to engage students in a digital world. He examines the ways in which interactive learning materials can improve student learning, including a discussion of the increased use of these resources and a detailed description of what these resources are and what they are not. Rather than merely passive content, Shank reiterates the need for these resources to capture the attention of learners, engage learners in meaningful experiences, and provide feedback on learner

progress. These opening chapters provide even the most novice of instructors seeking to integrate interactive learning materials with a clear concept of purpose and parameters of these resources.

Part 2 extends this conversation by exploring the types of interactive learning materials that are widely available to instructors and best practices for successfully searching these sites. Shank provides a thorough account of what he refers to as the "discovery process" for selecting and integrating interactive learning materials into the curriculum. The largest of the book's sections, this section describes the process for locating high quality and relevant interactive learning materials, provides a quick start guide for selecting these resources, and provides an evaluation of some of the most robust and current resources in this area. The section also discusses some of the major players in the move towards interactive learning materials, including colleges and universities, textbook publishers, museums, and many more.

The third part of the book describes the process of selecting, utilizing, and evaluating the use of interactive learning materials in order to assist the audience with successful implementation of these resources. Here, Shank explores the best practices for integrating interactive learning materials into the curriculum and offers practical suggestions on how to assess the impact on student learning. This section describes the benefits of integrating these interactive learning materials into current institutional management platforms (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle) in order to create a more centralized location for students to engage with content as well as provide the instructor with a way in which to track student engagement and effectiveness of resources. The section concludes with the presentation of several approaches to assessing impact of student learning, including a case study highlighting the successes and challenges associated with integrating interactive learning materials in an introductory calculus course.

In closing, Shank's thoughtful epilogue inspires faculty librarians and other instructional support staff to transform the future of higher education through the use of interactive learning materials. Shank illustrates the challenges and opportunities facing the use of these materials, highlighting the need for increased development and cooperation of educational stakeholders in order to enhance the use of interactive learning materials. Well-aware of the trend towards offering greater online educational resources, Shank admonishes his readers that educational stakeholders, rather than for-profit companies, must lead the way on this opportunity in order to ensure proper access and use of these resources.

Shank utilizes his expertise to present a straightforward, practical tool for understanding