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Chapter

Perspective Chapter: Academia as a Culture – The 'Academy' for Women Academics

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Abstract

This review explores what is known about women's experiences and identities within Australian public higher education to assist readers in contextualising the issue. In doing this, the chapter summarises what is known thus far about the key tensions that are experienced by women in academia, underpinned by the influence of the gender binary, heteronormativity, and intersectionality. Then, what is known about the academic identity thus far within the extant literature base is presented, as well as how the identity formation process can be complex and difficult to engage in for women academics. To conclude the chapter, the tensions are extended on to explore how academic ways of being were introduced and influenced by coloniality, as well as acknowledging how the neoliberal episteme has become embedded within the academic system to influence women and their academic experience over time. The aim of this chapter is to liberate thinking surrounding the experiences of women academics through the reviewing and discussion of the literature base and encourage further conversations and connections between academics worldwide surrounding this topic.

Keywords: women, academia, experience, identity, higher education

1. Introduction

Academia is a highly institutionalised environment, characterised by a hierarchical, traditional, and selective culture [1]. Within this environment, individuals are differentiated at multiple levels, for example, students, academics, support, and administrative staff, that all have differing responsibilities, access to opportunities, and positionings which can both exacerbate and reproduce social and institutional inequities [2]. The traditional culture of academia (which is based on hierarchical, bureaucratic systems) was founded on patriarchal, imperial, and colonial values that worked to define and maintain a specific maintenance of gendered roles and regulations, which have been proposed to disadvantage women [3, 4]. The operation of academia is similar to other organisational contexts world-wide, whereby the available discourses on organisational logic, as well as how organisational ways of being are defined, is embedded within the relations and worldviews of men [5, 6]. Based on the organisational logic being geared towards men, it can be difficult to both initiate

and sustain social change relating to gendered equity within academia. This is based on the persistence and maintenance of gendered processes and structures which can be influenced by heteronormative, gendered practices, that are partly ascribed to the construction and operation of the academic institution that works to attribute and legitimise neutrality to these processes [3, 7]. These institutional, gendered processes (which can be based on masculinities) can be invisible to most members of academia as they are based on systems of knowledge and belief systems that work to explain and justify current patriarchal and heteronormative practices [4, 8]. The justification of current practices can maintain how the academic system operates, to inform the academics' view of the way that things exist [1].

2. The gender binary: maintaining how things exist

Underpinning the justification of current gendered practices and the way that things exist for women in academia is the view of gender, sex, and how it is theorised to exist in a binary manner. The gender/sex binary refers to the perspective that sex is binary in nature and can directly determine gender [9, 10]. Within this context, 'sex' is considered as the biological composition of an individual (e.g., anatomy, chromosomes), while 'gender' refers to the roles associated or how one identifies (e.g., what it means to be a woman or man in a specific context, self-categorisation as a 'woman' and 'man') [9]. The gender binary is socially consequential, considered as not only descriptive (e.g., outlining what sexes and genders exist, and how the concepts are related), but also, pro- and pre-scriptive (e.g., dictating how gender and sex should or should not exist, and how they can be related) [9, 10]. In this manner of thinking surrounding gender and sex, a social system is enforced where individuals with two X chromosomes are expected to develop as biologically female, identify as women, and act in accordance with feminine stereotypes, whereas those with a X and Y chromosome develop male bodies, identify as men, and act in accordance with masculine stereotypes [11]. Additionally, the gender binary constructs expectations surrounding gender that work to construct men and women as possessing both complementary and oppositional identities, each with its own specific attributes (e.g., 'men are assertive', 'women are caring') [9, 10, 12, 13]. This way of thinking, doing, and being demands a compulsory conformity to individual gendered performances as either female or male (terms which are considered within the binary as mutually exclusive) [9, 11, 13]. Additionally, the binary dictates how the gendered performance must be congruent with the sex of the individual [11].

The identification of gender can also be associated with ideologies that work to support the gender/sex binary, such as gender essentialism, and the endorsement of stereotypes surrounding gender and sex [14]. Gender essentialism is the perspective that women and men are two informative, natural, and distinct categories [15]. Increased prejudice against those who violate assumptions of gender (e.g., women in leadership positions in academia) has been suggested as related to gender essentialism [14, 15]. Stereotypes that are endorsed surrounding gender often pose men as the socially advantaged group, aligned with patriarchal discourse, particularly when distinctiveness of sex is threatened [9, 10]. These stereotypes are implicated in the devaluation of women and men who behave in ways that are counter stereotypical [9, 10, 12, 13]. In combination, these ideologies can affect attitudes towards challenging the gender/sex binary and constructs the assumptions surrounding gender in a hierarchical manner [11, 12, 13]. For example, while patriarchal theory is evident, the suppression of

women and their identities has also illuminated the suppression of different identities and sexualities, where the social organisation of sex relies upon gender, compulsory heterosexuality, and the restriction of female sexuality [11, 12, 13]. The restrictions and organisation here further perpetuate the embeddedness of the gender binary, as well as normative values surrounding heterosexuality as the valued identity.

2.1 Heteronormativity: the gender binary in practice

The collection of norms, as well as how individuals reproduce complementary and distinct genders (male and female) is considered as the practice of heteronormativity [16, 17]. Heteronormativity allows for an illumination of the mundane and everyday ways in which heterosexuality and gender more broadly are normalised, naturalised, and taken for granted [18]. Compulsory heterosexuality is not only tied into the acts, ideas, and conceptions of gender and sexuality, but additionally, it can be viewed as a foundational structure of society and culture [12, 13, 16, 17]. Here, gender and sexuality are embedded in societal structures which are connected to socialised institutions, such as family, marriage, life, waged and domestic labour, economic support, and dependency [12, 13, 17]. As such, the awareness of heteronormativity can work as a tool which allows for the analysis of systems of oppression and contributes to the understanding of how gendered structures and hierarchies can be constructed in society [12, 13, 17]. When using this tool, we can explore how sexualities are performed and expressed, and how the societal system is structured, organised, and maintained [18].

Academia, at times, has been posed as gender neutral, when in reality, organisational logic originates in the abstract, intellectual domain of being 'male' [5]. Available discourses, reality, worldviews, and perspectives are seen from this particular standpoint, and as such, gender is difficult to observe when the masculine discourses are present [5, 6]. Men have, over time, adopted their behaviours and perspectives, to reflect all individuals, and as such, this has led to organisational processes and structures being conceptualised as gender neutral [5, 6]. While women and men academics can be treated differently by their academic institutions, it can be argued that specific gendered behaviours and attitudes are disseminated into gender-neutral structures, which works to separate the organisational structures and hierarchies, from the people within them [16–18]. Stating than an organisation is gendered means that exploitation and control, action and emotion, advantage, and disadvantage, and meaning and identity, can be constructed through, and in relation to, a distinction between what it means to be male, and female, or masculine, and feminine [4, 5]. Gender is not additive, rather, it forms an integral component of these processes, and as such, exploring women in academia cannot be properly understood without analysing gender [4, 5].

2.2 The 'doing' of gender

Gender has been conceptualised as operating within organisational institutions in at least five interacting processes, which, while posed as distinct, are components of the same experience [4–6]. They are as follows:

1. Constructing gendered divisions of labour, accepted behaviours, positionings and locations in space, of power, including how the institution governs these aspects. While there may be variations in the extent of the division of gender, men almost always occupy the highest positions of power. Further, organisa-

tional decisions initiate divisions of gender, and the practices of the organisation maintain them.

2. Symbols and images can express, reinforce, oppose, and/or explain the gendered divisions mentioned above. Sources of these can be in ideology, language, popular culture, the media, dress/appearance, and television (e.g., the image of a professor is often conceptualised as a white, cis-gender, older male).

3. Processes can produce gendered social structures that result in interactions between women and men, women and women, and men and men, that enact either submission or dominance.

4. The above components assist in producing gendered aspects of individual identities, which may include being conscious of these components in choosing where and what to do for work, the use of language, clothing options, and the presentation of the self as a gendered member of the institution.

5. Finally, gender is implicated in the creation and conceptualisation of social structures, framing the relations between other structures. Gender works to influence organisational logic, with assumptions and practices that allow organisations to function manifesting daily, and with the repeated enacting of ways of being, these problematic forms of logic are repeated and maintained.

Gendered differences within organisations have been suggested as due to the overarching structure, rather than characteristics related to 'being a woman' or 'being a man' [5]. The societal hierarchical system that has privileged some, and sanctioned others, is based on these presumed binaries of gender and sexuality, where beliefs and practices about what is 'normal' in everyday life is defined and enforced by the patriarchy [12, 13, 16, 18]. The issues that women face within large organisations, such as academia, are posed because of their placement within the overarching organisational structure, where they can be overpopulated in 'dead-end' jobs at the bottom and viewed as tokens at the top [5]. Gender becomes an issue where organisational roles reflect characteristics and images of the sorts of individuals that should populate them [5]. As such, women in academia are viewed as a part of a system where they are sanctioned and condemned for not fitting in and behaving according to the system that is constructed as a given, and acceptable [16–18]. Where the impact of the gender binary, heteronormativity, gendered processes, broader institutional logic, and ways of being is identifiable, is when these systems become visible, for example, when disadvantages are experienced and people speak out, as well as problematising the system and identifying how prejudices, discrimination, inequities, and contradictory workplace practices and policies are executed and operated [19]. These discriminatory, prejudicial practices and policies have been shown to negatively impact the experiences of women within Australian public higher education, and even more so for women who adopt multiple identities and ways of being.

3. Intersectionality: a multiplicity of identities

What can assist in maintaining the status quo for women in academia is the homogenisation of their identities. In the current research context, homogenisation

illustrates how women academics have been constructed as one-dimensional, with the gender binary further perpetuating the presence of 'one type of woman' within academia [20]. Constructing women in a manner that infers they share a singular, similar understanding and experience of academia fails to integrate the multiplicity of identities and intersectional perspectives that are not privileged in academia [21]. Intersectionality refers to the numerous ways that social identifiers are mutually shaped, and can be interrelated through epistemes such as neoliberalism, colonialism, geopolitics, and cultural configurations, which can shift relations of oppression and power [22]. The interactivity of these social structures can foster life experiences in relation to forms of privilege and oppression [22]. The term was formed originally within African American feminist and critical race studies, where it has now been extended to explore the many relationships in research amongst multiple modalities and dimensions of social relations and subject formations [23, 24] Intersectionality is useful in exploring the interaction amongst categories of difference within the individual lives, practices of society, institutional structures, and cultural ideologies, as well as the outcomes when these interact, in relation to power processes [24, 25].

Social identifiers that can be acknowledged when exploring intersectionality include, but are not limited to, gender, race, class, age, body type, attractiveness, caste, citizenship, ethnicity, height and weight, education, income, immigration status, mental health status, physical ability, marital status, nationality, occupation, sex, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status [22]. These are considered as naturalised, but not necessarily natural, ways of categorising individuals [22]. By considering the plethora of social identity structures here, it allows for an expansion of the definitional scope of intersectionality to allow everyone's unique social advantages and disadvantages, to be subject to critique [22, 24, 25]. Everyone can entail the multiplicatively oppressed, but additionally, the multiplicatively privileged, where it is acknowledged that individuals can be subject to both social advantages and disadvantages [22, 24, 25]. It is important to acknowledge intersectionality within higher education, as the analyses that stem from this acknowledgement call for social justice and equity in education, as well as having the power to transform knowledge, higher education, and society [22, 24, 25].

4. The operation of academia

Within academia, it has been argued that "the structure of the labour market, relations in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the underlying wage relation are always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity, and material inequalities between women and men" [5, 26]. Historically, white men have had more opportunities, and have been afforded more privilege within academia than individuals with different identities [27, 28]. Academia has been acknowledged as generally overrepresented in relation to the male gender, white students, and those of Asian ethnicities [29], and described as cold and unwelcoming to women [28]. Reasons for this have been proposed, for example, within academia, bureaucratic and patriarchal discourse is said to be embedded within the actions of all academics, with a clear focus on innovation, success, and productivity that work to value white men, rather than women and other minority groups [30]. Further, attitudes, beliefs, and solutions that are valued in academia thus far are limited in attending to the underlying economic, social, and political complexities that shape and construct the experiences of minoritised groups [12, 13, 31]. Finally, solutions have been proposed

and implemented so far that rely on a problem definition (i.e., problematising the individual, rather than the system), which is widely contested, and embedded within a discourse of male-normative competition that resolves the academic crisis as something to win, while marginalised others are left behind [1, 32].

4.1 The disembodied worker

Engaging in work within academia has been constructed as an abstract job most suited for a disembodied worker, who exists only for their work, and nothing else [5, 6]. The hypothetical 'ideal' disembodied worker is assumed to have no other responsibilities outside of their job that may impinge on said job [5, 6]. For workers who have obligations outside the boundaries of the job, this can make them unsuited for the position [5]. For example, in academia, the disembodied worker is privileged as a male worker whose life centres on his full-time, life-long, academic job, while he has a partner (presumably female) who can assist with other responsibilities and the familial obligations [5]. Further, working in a 'job' is implicitly considered to be gendered, even if the institution presents it as gender neutral [6]. The 'job' contains the division of labour and the separation of the personal and professional domains based on gender [6]. This assumes that the 'job' is particularly gendered, based around domestic life and the social production of norms relevant to familial and caring responsibilities [6]. Hierarchies in the institution are then further gendered based on the assumption that an individual who focuses all their time on their work is responsible, compared to an individual who divides their commitments is seen as uncommitted [5, 6]. As such, the concept of the disembodied worker excludes and marginalises women who, by definition, cannot achieve these expectations and standards, as doing so would require them to become 'like a man' [5, 33, 34].

5. Tensions in Women's academic experiences

The experience of working in academia, and conceptualising identity, are more complicated for women academics [35]. Barriers to women's participation in academia can impact how they identify within the setting, with many barriers suggested in the literature base that are either structurally, or individually oriented [36, 37]. There are varying explanations that have been proposed, for example, in comparison to men, women are subjected to higher expectations from other individuals in their lives, academic or otherwise [38]. Others have suggested that women may experience identity conflicts between academia and other settings, leading to invalidation and conflict in their academic identities [35, 39]. There also appear to be conflicts for women in academia between conducting 'good research', and what it means to be a 'good researcher' [40]. 'Good research' relates to the process of the work, fostering motivation, achievement, self-expression, creativity, and self-interest, whereas being a 'good researcher' relates to the outputs and conforming to ideals that meet the goals and needs of the university, such as applying for, and receiving grants, publications in high impact journals, and citations [40]. Finally, a broader neoliberal higher education research context has been proposed to contribute to the challenges experienced by women in higher education, with a focus on the increasing pressure to be productive compounding with the tensions surrounding the amount of time available to balance with one's other commitments (e.g., teaching, service tasks, mentoring, familial and/or caring responsibilities) [41].

Women academics have also been suggested to experience the proverbial trinity of faculty roles to varying degrees, for example, their teaching, service, and research responsibilities [39]. The varying degrees of responsibility within these roles depend on the positioning of the woman within the institution. Where the discrepancy lies is how women academics are expected to engage in teaching and service roles to a greater extent than male academics, who are presumed to be afforded more time to focus on their research responsibilities [35]. Faculty positions are bound to specific university contexts, as well as specific duties, but the individuals who hold these positions are not [39].

Women in senior academic roles have reported on the impact of gendered stereotypes, such as the expectation of women performing caring roles. This stereotype assumes that women are natural teachers [42], however this may not be the role that women want to adopt or are necessarily best at. Comparatively, leadership roles are stereotyped as being masculine; this aligns with the statistic that most senior leadership positions in academia are held by males [35]. Additionally, men are often evaluated according to competency, whereas women are evaluated according to their likeability [43, 44]. Women are encouraged to take on administrative roles, which may offer limited opportunities for career progression [44, 45]. These stereotypes restrict the types of roles that academics are expected to perform [46]. When women are viewed as acting inconsistently with feminine stereotypes (e.g., not wanting to adopt nurturing, pastoral care roles), and consistent with masculine stereotypes (e.g., being assertive, or self-promoting), they may experience negative consequences such as limits to their career progression for not adhering to the traditional, expected academic way of being [21].

When women engage with roles and identities outside of academia, there is a perception that their competency and commitment to the academic setting will be reduced or threatened [21, 47]. Further, women who balance work with other commitments, roles, and competing identities (for example, but not exclusive to, motherhood and/or caring roles) are perceived by their colleagues as stretching themselves too thin [47, 48]. Comparatively, men are celebrated for their attempts at balancing the work and home life and are viewed by other academics as more responsible and accountable than their women counterparts [49]. It appears that men do not face the same bind or negative consequences from occupying multiple roles in the academic setting [50]. Comparatively, it has been suggested that women must work harder to have their contributions and achievements recognised both inside, and outside of, academia [48].

Difficulties with accessing mentoring networks and role models [36, 51], experiencing the impact of implicit biases, harassment, and discrimination [52], experiencing gender stereotyping [53], underrepresentation [54], navigating masculinist organisational cultures [37], gendered divisions of faculty labour [55], and difficulties with balancing caring and academic responsibilities [56] have all been suggested as barriers to women's academic experience and conceptualisation of identity. Further, these barriers can accumulate in their effects over time, reflecting an experience known as the glass ceiling, whereby women academics are hindered by the deeply routine, embedded organisational practices and policies of academia [57]. These practices are influenced by patriarchal, gendered discourses that view male academics as the majority in academia, and how to work and identify within these fields is bound within men and masculinity [58]. The barriers for women in academia perpetuate a chilly, unwelcoming climate, which can be characterised by a lack of encouragement and recognition for women, a subtle process of devaluation, and resultant lower levels

of confidence [59]. This climate presents difficulties in identifying as an academic for women, who struggle to feel as if they belong, which can be emphasised by the routine, everyday practices that act as significant normalising and invisible barriers for them [57]. These tensions appear to be further enhanced by the complexities of navigating the ongoing structural changes within the Australian public higher education setting [60]. As such, it is clear there is a need to understand how 'traditional' Australian tertiary education systems have changed in recent times, as this is crucial to contextualising women's academic experiences and identity formation.

5.1 Women's academic experiences over time

While the literature details some of the tensions in women's academic experiences, where it is limited is in exploring how the academic and professional identities can change over time, as well as the impact of these transitions on the conceptualisation and transformation of such identities. It is important to recognise that the becoming of, and being, a faculty member is a dynamic journey which is marked by movement of some form, whether that be through promotion and/or receiving tenure, moving to other roles and/or institutions, moving beyond academia after retirement, and/or leaving due to disillusionment with the academy [61]. There is an interplay of individual and institutional dynamics that can change over time, which can influence women's home and work identities, with a multitude of differing experiences, successes, setbacks, and choices [3, 62]. The patriarchal setting, or the powerful social structures of society where women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men, appears pervasive not only in academia, but within all facets of society:

> *"Yet women's inclusion in education, the franchise, public life, and the labour market have been on terms designed to meet the needs of individual men, unfettered by ties of motherhood, childcare, and [unpaid] domestic labour. Women seeking inclusion have had to negotiate the conflicting demands made upon them by their dual role as best they could on an individual basis" [62].*

Scholars criticise the operation of contemporary society based on its failure to acknowledge that gender can be a barrier to social well-being, as well as its role in maintaining patriarchal assumptions about the roles of women and men over different time periods [61]. This is one reason proposed within the literature to support the marginalisation of women within their work and family roles:

> *"The prevailing conception of gender is understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men, and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively" [63].*

As such, the positioning of women academics within the academic context is embedded within tensions and paradoxes between the commitment to the institution, the organisational structure, as well as broader systemic gendered roles and norms that manifest over time [17]. These tensions can form the basis for the conflicts within conceptualising identities, whereby women may desire to change the current state of being within the institution, while experiencing conflicts in their commitment to the same institution [7].

6. The academic identity within the higher education context

The academic identity refers to an individual's understanding of who they are, within their academic institution [64]. One's academic identity can influence their self-perception, as well as their perspective of how others see them [65]. How an academic identifies in relation to both the personal and professional domains has been suggested to have a significant impact (for better or worse) on an academic's work productivity and performance [48, 65, 66]. The conceptualisation of academic identities can be influenced by many elements, including working roles and responsibilities, the success, and achievements of the academic, the perceived power and voice that an academic possesses, and the pressure to be the ideal worker within the academic setting [67, 68]. Previous literature has reported on the struggles of conceptualising an academic identity (particularly by those within minority groups, such as women) [40, 48, 69], as well as the complexities surrounding the conceptualisation of identity [64], but does not consider how the notions of self, identity, and institutional governance for women in higher education interact. Additionally, there is a lack of appreciation that knowledge can be socially constructed, which can influence how different perspectives can shape institutional practices and ways of being for women academics at different career stages.

The identities of academics, and the forming of them, can be complex, and consist of various components and elements that stem from various sources [70]. One understanding of identity as a construct is that it can continually shift and change over time and is fluid [71]. For example, it has been stated that,

> *"Identity is understood not as a fixed property, but as a part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being a part of the academic... having an identity as an academic, this multiple and shifting term exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world. As such, it is important that personal detailed attention is paid, especially to how changes are being experienced in higher education, and how this can influence an academic's identity" [61].*

The shift acknowledged here is important to consider in combination with an understanding of identity being viewed as most influenced by the identification and interaction that an individual has with significant others (e.g., peers, family, friends) [72]. As such, the forming of the academic identity can be viewed as complex and may comprise of multiple competing influences that change and shift over time [71]. Some authors view the academic identity in line with the overall conceptualisation of identity as a fluid, shifting concept, which can differ for each individual academic [61]. Through this definition, the academic identity is considered as the understandings and expressions of one's beliefs, values, dispositions, and actions, within the higher education context [64]. The explanation here also includes the academics' perspectives on the ways of being and doing within their many roles and responsibilities [48, 65, 66].

In contrast, other authors have conceptualised an academic identity as a concrete, fixed entity [70, 73, 74]. Supporting this view is the notion that within institutions, individuals tend to be viewed as more homogenous, rather than heterogeneous, and are viewed in terms of their particular social group [73]. As such, the identity in this depiction is generally defined as a concrete, distinctive characteristic that belongs to

either an individual, or one that is shared by all members of a social category [48]. This view essentially constructs identity as comparative in nature, emphasising a degree of homogeneity within a group (i.e., a degree of sameness, or oneness with other individuals) in a particular context at a particular point in time [74].

Whether identity is viewed as fluid, or concrete, there is still an acknowledgement of a shift, with identities adapting to societal and consequential institutional changes over time that have resulted in different responses from academics [61], As such, I align with the perspective that identities have the capacity to both generate change through a continual process of deconstruction, construction, and reconstruction [75]. Identities change during periods of shifting and institutional change, which can reflect changes in the overall climate of society [72]. It is important to acknowledge and pay close attention to how these changes can influence an academic's way of being and knowing, both important aspects of the academic identity.

6.1 Pressures surrounding the conceptualisation of the academic identity

Despite the contrasting definitions on what an academic identity is, there are some similarities between these understandings. The academic identity appears to be constructed under several dimensions that are multi-faceted, as well as being influenced by social movements (e.g., neoliberalism) that can occur in different ways, degrees, and contexts [60]. Authors express that "...academic work is not what it used to be. Not because the impulse to engage in this work has diminished, but because academics now have to deal with further pressures qualitatively different to ever before" [76]. These pressures can present several challenges in how academic identities are constructed and conceptualised. Shifts between a liberal to neoliberal episteme in higher education appear to have created a more governed environment, which prompts me to question (as well as being questioned by other academics):

> *Have the changes in higher education, augmented by the neoliberal episteme, made the institution more important than the disciplines, and as such, are the disciplines now being perceived as more important than the academics themselves?*

A paradox in academia is evident, where the desire to implement change and be forward-thinking in perspective, conflicts with the institution governing individuals to follow set standards in a manner that makes these embedded practices difficult to question [44]. Claims support this notion and explores the consequences to questioning these ways of being, stating that "it is extraordinary how easily one can become a pariah in an academic community for questioning the state of being, when in reality, everyone is supposed to be so broad-minded" [77].

6.2 How do dominant academic identities manifest in higher education?

Higher education institutions govern individuals to engage in particular practices and identify in certain ways. The prominence of the neoliberal episteme has a significant influence on the normative practices within academia [78–82]. Further to this, some identities are more frequently represented (statistically) and viewed as normative within higher education (e.g., the white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual male academic) [34]. Theories and ideologies elucidate how certain identities and knowledge systems can function and be valued in higher education; these include hegemonic masculinity, and the influence of colonisation, and Eurocentrism [83–85].

Hegemonic masculinity is a theory that explains the legitimisation of the male dominant position and the subordination of women and other minority groups and identities (i.e., where hegemonic refers to dominance) [83]. The neoliberal academic context supports dominant, traditional values relating to hegemonic masculinity, and academic identities that challenge the status quo (i.e., white, cis-gendered, able-bodied, male dominance) are at a disadvantage [86]. Hegemonic masculinity operates under the assumption that the gender binary is the dominant and accepted way to categorise gendered identities [83]. Within the academic context, women are not necessarily free to forge academic identities that are authentic to their experiences, rather, they experience pressure to pursue a prescribed gendered academic identity [44]. As such, within academia, the distinct categorisation of masculine and feminine identities prescribes gendered expectations regarding academic role performance [21]. While an academic may be able to form an identity, the conditions under which they do so are inherently limited and restricted for all, and particularly so for women. These conditions have been proposed to manifest through the privileging of particular identities and ways of being, underpinned by coloniality, Eurocentrism, and the neoliberal episteme.

7. Academic ways of being, coloniality, and Eurocentrism

Particular ideologies can elucidate how specific identities, knowledge systems, and ways of being have manifested and are privileged in today's academic context. Underpinning the privileging of these elements is the process of coloniality, which is understood in critical terms to articulate human agency and choice, traditional, dominant values, and how power can be used in an exploitative sense [84]. Coloniality refers to structures and practices which are derived from settler colonialism and governance that continue to influence social relations and institutions in the present day, while deriving originally from historical practices and long-standing patterns of power [84, 85]. Coloniality is propagated through imperialism, which works to facilitate economic and cultural expansion, power, and control over societies [85]. This form of large-scale domination is successful based on the large disparity in power, as well as the securing and subjugating of the minority populations [87]. The historical role of coloniality in Australia has served three prominent functions: a reduction of the power of Indigenous nations, forcing the adoption and assimilation of a westernised way of thinking, and the perpetuation of narratives which serve to erase the identities of those not privileged within the way of knowing [88, 89].

Practices and policies from the motherland (i.e., the United Kingdom [UK]) prevented the traditional landowners and other minority groups from accessing power and resources [90, 91]. This power was held with the individuals from the UK who had taken the land from the traditional custodians (i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those from the First Nation), illustrating Aboriginal dispossession and colonial takeover, with the assumption that European culture and knowledge was superior to all others, and that the Europeans could define the world in their own terms [90, 91]. While some forms of colonialism aim to take resources to place the colonising country at an advantage, the objective of the coloniser upon possession of Australian land extended on this to include the acquisition of land to permanently settle [92]. Through this process of settling, the most destructive impacts to Indigenous communities were noted, where the exploitation of human and natural resources, as well as the acquisition, control,

and definition of these resources and the land, was identified [93]. The process outlined here was accomplished through the genocide, forced removal, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples within colonised land. The colonial defining of land and knowledge devalued the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; as such, the majority were killed through genocide (random killings, punitive expeditions, and organised massacres) [90, 91]. The colonisers forcibly removed any traces of Australian Indigenous peoples from their homes, placing them in schools with westernised education to remove all traces of their Indigenous identity [90, 91]. Punishment was implemented when Indigenous peoples spoke their language, and the working conditions were inhumane with no payment, or ability to communicate with others [93].

The superiority of the majority was validated through beliefs, ideas, and values embedded in social representations [90, 91]. This led to the European colonists ensuring that they, and their higher education institutions, benefitted from forms of colonial capitalism, as well as having their ideas and beliefs validated as the norm [92]. This was considered as a means of cultural violence, an aspect of the culture that legitimises violence through direct and structural forms, to privilege the Eurocentric value of a single knowledge and form of education [94]. Coloniality is also underpinned by institutionalised, and cultural racism. Institutionalised racism is where organisational practices and policies prevent members of oppressed groups from accessing power and resources, whereas cultural racism is where particular beliefs, ideas, and values embedded in social representations validate the superiority of one group over the other [90, 91]. The colonisers developed theories of popularised discourses through structural and cultural racism that reinforced support for their colonial endeavours [88, 89]. Through the colonisers' perspective, this legitimised the oppression, dispossession, and domination of the colonised subjects on the basis of intellectual and ethical grounds [88, 89]. European colonists, through their actions, combined these forms of racism to ensure their ethnic group was the primary beneficiary of colonial capitalism, which lead to a dominant culture in Australia titled 'western' [85, 95].

7.1 Constructing the Western, Eurocentric University

Coloniality is based on European origins and worldviews which are upheld and work to intentionally replace other knowledge systems, which then dominate society [85]. In academia, knowledge and science have been influenced by cultural racism to assume universality over particular worldviews, with the European scientific paradigm introduced during colonisation as the only valid system of academic knowledge [90]. The university context was the site in which the colonial matrix of knowledge was developed, which were categories of thought, and epistemic ways of knowing and being, that were developed by the coloniser, within their subsequent privileged languages [88, 89]. The colonial matrix of knowledge attacked and marginalised any form of knowledge that did not fit into the colonised ontological and epistemic framework [88, 89]. Foundational knowledge within the westernised higher education context is based on epistemic racism, with the genocide of people and knowledge underpinned by not only material aspects of colonialism, but how the Eurocentric ways of knowing, and being in the world replaced other forms of knowledge [96]. Through the validation of the European scientific paradigm, it is argued that a mono-cultural, universal western tradition of Eurocentrism is promoted, whereby the Eurocentric universal truth is accepted, and other forms of knowledge

and dissemination are invalidated [95]. Eurocentrism reflects the societal values and beliefs which were validated and constructed a dominant culture of western to disseminate the only valid system of knowledge at the time [90, 97]. The universality of the western worldview was based on European origins, which were upheld and worked to intentionally replace other knowledge systems, which then dominated society [85]. The Eurocentric, western worldview privileged white males as the majority, which impacted how white women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women with caring responsibilities, and other minorities were constructed and positioned in society [98]. The western tradition of Eurocentrism was promoted, whereby the Eurocentric universal truth was accepted, and other forms of knowledge and dissemination were invalidated [95]. Knowledge that is gained from the First World (the United States, and later, the UK) was disseminated in a one-way stream that privileges and promotes European and American academic cultural, and patriarchal imperialism [90].

7.2 The influence of coloniality on higher education

Higher education institutions have been influenced by particular ways of being and doing which reflect and preserve the dominant European colonial systems and practices [72]. The institutions were established upon the epistemic and material histories of coloniality, with universities across Australia, influenced by the British, providing education to the colonisers with the knowledge of those they would rule over [99]. This was achieved in such a manner that the expanding of colonial knowledge was viewed as dominating in nature, where the university was viewed as a context which was built and financed by dispossession, enslavement, coloniality, genocide, and constructed as a setting where colonial knowledge could be developed and extended outward [88, 89]. The knowledge privileged by coloniality built upon the subjectivities of a specific social agent (i.e., white, Christian, British men), which served to privilege other identities who did not meet these dimensions of identity [98]. It has been summarised that:

> *Education, like the institutions and societies it derives from, is neither culturally neutral nor fair. Education has its roots in a patriarchal, Eurocentric society, complicit with multiple forms of oppression of women, sometimes men, children, minorities, and Indigenous peoples [88].*

As such, the Australian public higher education institutions within the colonised society represented a crucial site for negotiating between the domination of coloniality, and Indigenous sovereignty [100]. Concerns surrounding the relationship between colonial control and power have been suggested, with it argued that:

> *Colonial includes all forms of dominating and oppressive relationships that emerge from structures of power and privilege inherent and embedded in our contemporary social relations...colonial is not defined simply as foreign or alien, but more importantly, as dominating and opposing [101].*

Through colonisation, the control of political, economic, and symbolic systems become institutionalised and obscured by ideologies that work to justify exploitative uses of power [72, 84]. This allows for the superiority of the coloniser, and the inferiority of the colonised, to manifest [84]. The continuing form of coloniality and

imperialism works to perpetuate privileged ways of being in academia, for example, academia operates as a patriarchal, exclusionary, elitist, imperial setting that privileges white, heterosexual men and their ways of being and doing as superior [87]. Members of the dominant group (i.e., white men) are privileged over others, such as women in academia, who then find themselves in a devalued position and treated in a less favourable way [85]. As such, other identities who differ from the dominant patriarchal practices and ways of being, such as women and minoritised groups, are constructed in this colonised, imperialist setting as inferior [87]. Further, the ways in which academic knowledge is structured, as well as the governing organisational structures of higher education are fundamentally imperialist and colonial [85]. The culture of academia and the systems of management and governance all work in ways which protect the privileges that are already set-in place, which then disadvantage women academics [102].

Education has been viewed as the perfect vehicle in the domination of coloniality [88]. Colonialism within Australia was only considered the beginning, and given the enormity of the process, it was expected to live on as an unconscious aspect of daily life, specifically, through education [88]. Given this, it is important to make conscious how entrenched and ongoing the colonial process is within the education context. As such, a key component of this consciousness raising is for all individuals to recognise how we are implicated in colonial practices [89]. Most are unaware of this because of how normalised colonial ideologies are in both educational, and everyday contexts [89]. The normalisation exists based on the education of individuals through pedagogical and research practices [89].

The culture of academia can be suggested as never having engendered a sense of security for women. Historically, the setting has illustrated its inegalitarian and hierarchical structure, to facilitate a setting that fosters exclusion, elitism, and inequalities [85, 102]. As a setting, it acts to marginalise many from the security of the centre, or ivory tower, where many wider social inequities (based on gender, social class, race, and ethnicity) are reflected and reinforced through traditional practices [85, 102]. Considering these inequalities, as well as the social and psychological mechanisms of colonisation and imperialism, the relationship of domination and control becomes more pervasive over generations [103]. As such, higher education to this day continues in playing its part in perpetuating colonising, imperialist, and globalising practices, alongside the mass media and other westernised institutions [102]. Definitions of reality can be made to prevail over others, for example, using power underpinning a psychological imperialism through laws, rituals, instructions, and other forces [87]. The neoliberal episteme is one such example of particular guidelines that govern the academics in terms of their ways of being and doing in academia [60]. As such, academic institutions appear to focus less on how individuals can challenge Eurocentric norms and practices, and more on how they can assimilate and adjust to these forms of capitalist modernisation and culture [87, 90]. Discussion of the capitalist modernisation in the academic culture relies on exploring how the neoliberal episteme privileges particular academic identities and ways of being.

8. Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an ideology that reflects an increased level of productivity through the marketisation of institutions, as well as exhibiting a set of economic policies that have, over time, become embedded within western culture [104].

Neoliberalism, as an episteme, reflects a way of knowing that can be present within the academic way of being [82]. Berry [75] describes neoliberalism as knowledge structures of rationalist scientism, empiricism, and productivity, quantified in a hard-and-fast manner that values efficiency and standardisation, as well as arguing that the dominant knowledge system can be indistinguishable from the neoliberal agenda that facilitates it. Further, neoliberalism has been associated with a positivist epistemology, and that the way of knowing, reflective in the episteme, values "externally defined rules and evaluative criteria, utility, and value for money, as well as scientific excellence" [105]. Institutions, under the neoliberal episteme, are governed to produce employable and local workers, or subjects, to supply services that are managed through neoliberal economic strategies [61].

The nature of work, and the workplace, within higher education has changed dramatically over the past two decades as a result of those in a position of power, as well as through the processes of globalisation and neoliberalism [106, 107]. Changes in the dominant socio-economic ideology within Australian tertiary education systems have transformed 'traditional' academic settings [108]. These changes have included a shift from a liberal setting that was characterised by a negotiated, flat, collegial governance structure, with professional autonomy valued, and the freedom for academics to define their role, to a more competitive, dominated, and hierarchical neoliberal structure, where the rights of academics are dependent on the market [108]. The shift has been strongly influenced by the manifestation of the neoliberal episteme. Many definitions of neoliberalism have been offered in the extant literature base, particularly in the social sciences literature, but most have commonalities that can be drawn upon [72].

The first evidence of neoliberalism was identified in the 1960s, although some argue that the episteme manifested and was evident in society earlier than this [106]. As an ideology, neoliberalism acknowledges the value of economic markets, both in their existence, and their operation [106]. The operation of the market-like structure within the institution acts as a guide for human action, capable of replacing any existing ideological beliefs that guide the individual's way of being and knowing, focusing on what is valued by the institution instead [109]. Institutions guided by the neoliberal episteme advocate for economic growth and view it as fundamental for the successful operation of society [109]. In combination, neoliberalism can encompass a range of economic, political, and social practices and ideas which functions at both an individual and institutional level [106].

8.1 The impact of neoliberalism on Australian public higher education

Within the higher education context, neoliberalism has changed ideas around teaching, research, and service. Neoliberalism is a change into the free market; a shift from educating students within professions to a focus on building marketable skills and knowledge within research [110]. The restructuring of universities has changed the expectations held for academics, for example, in how they provide services to the institution. Some suggest there is increasing pressure to be productive within the working environment [111] and these expectations are perceived by academics as near impossible to achieve [112]. Further, there appears an implicit expectation that the research interests of academics will benefit the interests of the schools, faculties, and institutions, with the importance of meeting targets that benefit the institution, rather than conducting research that the academic themselves enjoys, or finds pleasure in conducting [108]. In context of these pressures, higher education is a setting

where decision making capacity and personal autonomy may be limited [44]. In this new context, the focus is on generating capital and revenue [41], and measuring performance based on targets of research outputs and marketable skills [110].

Neoliberal ideas have changed the role of the academic in terms of the standards of how knowledge is gained, valued, and measured, for example, academics are viewed as now providing a service to their students, or 'clients' [113]. The impact of neoliberalism on higher education institutions has been summarised: "...neoliberalism brought various forms of external regulation, a new phenomenon for many institutions, and a greatly enhanced burden for others. Such large changes have had a strong influence on academics' beliefs and practices" [114]. The polarities, tensions, contrasts, and complementarities that are seen and felt by academics (and distinguished by neoliberalism) have impacted academia from both a local and global perspective [115]. Neoliberalism has reconceptualised the era that individuals live in, in that the knowledge that is produced is linked with economic outputs [107]. What this means is that advancements in knowledge are made within numerous institutional sites and research communities, simply, that knowledge does not come from one place, or from one person [104]. The individual or system who creates knowledge, or at least, has the ability to create knowledge, is situated within a position of power. Those with more power are constructed as experts within neoliberal systems, crafted with the responsibility to construct knowledge, subjectify certain individuals and ways of being and knowing, and allocate them hierarchical social positions [107]. As such, the individuals, the knowledge, and the systems are governed, both by the self and by external systems of control [106].

As institutions strive for competitive advantage in the marketplace, new features have been designed to be able to minimise costs and maximise profits. In relation to academic settings:

- While women academics' participation has increased within the institution, this is often through low-paid, casual, fixed-term, or part-time contracts [110, 112].
- Managerialist strategies and bureaucratic organisation are used to gain a firmer control over academics and their practices [110, 112].
- The increase in working hours has led to the blurring of boundaries between leisure, family, and work [110, 112].
- An increase in emphasising some forms of flexibility and lifelong learning, ironically, has reduced the emphasis on career continuity and progression, as well as the availability of secure employment contracts [110, 112].

Further, with the influence of the neoliberal ideology, related ideals such as individual enterprise, maximised efficiency, responsiveness to user needs, and cost effectiveness have filtered into institutions globally [114]. Higher education institutions are not exempt from this, with evidence illustrating an increased emphasis on measured outputs, performance indicators, higher index scores (relating to academic productivity) and grant income [113]. Consequently, these new behaviours and ideals that are characteristic of the free market have exchanged the traditional culture of open intellectual enquiry with the new culture of performativity [44]. To have agency surrounding the choice of research and inquiry, has now been replaced with academics having to conduct research that meets performance targets for the institution, which may involve conducting research that does not fit with the research area of the academic [44, 113].

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These issues are of particular significance regarding the potential impact of the gendered academic environment on the experiences of women, and how they can create tensions for women academics. These tensions and inequalities are experienced more strongly by women, as the structure of academia embraces a patriarchal culture in combination to the neoliberal ideology. As such, academia now promotes the fully committed, visible, and self-promoting worker who is unaffected by familial responsibilities as the ideal worker [21, 47]. Additionally, the structure of higher education institutions simultaneously reinforces ideal worker standards that are masculinised in nature, as well as framing progression and advancement as merit-based and gender-neutral, which act to both perpetuate and intensify existing gendered inequalities [61]. Consequently, the patriarchal and neoliberal system impacts women whereby their career progression is intermittent and slower, compared to their male counterparts, but accompanied with more physical and psychological exhaustion, based on their multiple roles and responsibilities [106].

8.2 How did neoliberal ways of being become embedded in academia?

The neoliberal practices that stem from the episteme work to allow particular ways of being to function. Additionally, they can illuminate how certain discourses and ideologies are enacted and perpetuated. In the context of neoliberal academia, the ways of being that are constructed can be viewed as practices that allow the normative conditions of academia to exist. For example, neoliberalism can produce in individuals: higher levels of flexibility, cooperation, and productivity with the constructing of economic objectives that allow for the economic benefit of the institution [116]. Further, neoliberalism allows for the review of academics and their performance, whether the individuals are meeting the requirements of the system, as well as conceptualising the value of the academic to the system [117]. These can be considered as simultaneously good for some, and bad for other academics. Neoliberal ways of being in academia include an oppressing of creativity in teaching practices and criticality in research, the generation and demand for competition, as well as marginalisation and suppression of critical thinking [82]. Further to this, the masculination of the academy perpetuates the technologies of competition, individualism, and appropriation being performed in the self, which at times may conflict with other ways of being constructed by the academic [72].

The neoliberal episteme is viewed as powerful and insidious in that it can shape the subjectivities for all academics, irrespective of gender, age, or career stage [118]. While the neoliberal discourse can be viewed as "monstrous and absurd", for example, through the valuing of intellectual work in dollar terms [116], the superficial set of governing practices outlined thus far are not directly intended to enter and change the identities of academic workers, or to undermine their passion for, and commitment to their work [119]. Rather, neoliberal ways of being are rationalised by working to improve and enhance the practices of individuals to make them more useful and relevant to the system [109]. Individuals are viewed as subjects and products of the neoliberal system, reconstructed to be part of a whole ensemble directed and focused to the pursuit and interests of the system [120]. As such, a subject's academic identities and sense of self is reconstructed over time to reflect the ethos and structure of the neoliberal episteme, and all aspects of social behaviour can now be reconceptualised from an economic lens [121]. It has been suggested that:

> *rather than govern by dictating rights and responsibilities, neoliberalism proceeds by harnessing desires for independence and creativity to the interests of business,*

> *reconfiguring workers as entrepreneurs of their own skills and abilities and reconfiguring the social relations of capitalism to emphasise competition, not between workers and capitalists, but between workers themselves [122].*

Within western society, academics now work within a dramatically different educational system and context from what has existed years ago [106]. Neoliberalism has brought differing forms of external regulation, which has constructed a new phenomenon for institutions, but poses more of a burden for other academics [104]. These burdens and challenges have been suggested to influence the academics' identities, beliefs, and actions [117]. Academics, when reflecting on their identities, can be forced to review and work on themselves, in terms of self-surveillance, conduct, discipline, and self-restraint. The techniques of government and governmentality work to impose the social personality of the individual, whereby the academic's freedom is engaged to display desirable ways of behaving [120]. In the context of neoliberalism, the behaviour is to become tolerable and productive in relation to the labour market and capitalist ideals [105]. The real political task within society is when critiquing these practices, one must critique the workings of the institution and how they influence the conceptualisation of one's identities. The neoliberal workings of the institution can appear to be both independent and neutral; forms of discipline and conduct which have always obscurely exercised itself [120]. Individuals can work to fight fear and fight the insidiousness of the neoliberal episteme which have been legitimised by the ways of being of the institution. As such, research that explores the experiences of academics and aims to deconstruct these working practices, can assist in developing an understanding of the academic identity and overall understanding of the academic way of being. It is important to elucidate discourse surrounding the academic way of being, to be able to make sense of how neoliberalism, as a difficult and intangible ideology, works and manifests through the experiences of academics [104].

9. Conclusions

This chapter summarised the current state of women's positioning within higher education, setting the scene by providing an exploration of what is known thus far surrounding academic identities, the gender binary, heteronormativity, intersectionality, and how coloniality has influenced academia. The chapter concluded with an exploration of how neoliberalism has been conceptualised in the Australian public higher education setting.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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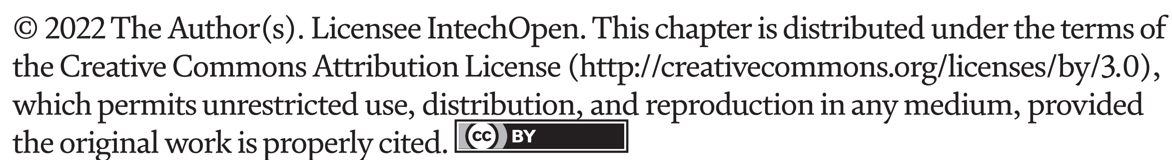

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