

SEXIST HARASSMENT AT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The challenge for the study was to elaborate sexist harassment experiences at the university, the laws and policies that define and regulate sexist harassment, and the implementation and outcome of such policies that aim to prevent sexist harassment within the university organization. The whole research process resulted in two theoretical themes reflective of the areas of sexual harassment and gender equality: the first one is conceptual and the second one is organizational. The concepts of gender and sexual harassment, sexist harassment, and sexist discrimination are, firstly, used to refer to the same phenomenon, also indicating how the phenomenon is understood and how it should be solved. Secondly, it seems essential to elaborate the topic from the individual level to the organizational level in a way that also considers individuals and the realisation of their capabilities within an organization. Both of these questions are also important in developing the theory further, as that is also an aim of my study. The research contributes to the conceptual-theoretical discussion of the development of gender equality work at organizations.

Keywords: equality, gender, harassment, law, sexism, university

Introduction

Gender Equality Law and its Implementation at University

Finnish universities have a statutory responsibility to promote gender equality. The Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men states that the authorities shall promote equality between women and men purposefully and systematically, especially by modifying the circumstances that prevent the achievement of equality (Section 4 of the Act on Equality between Women and Men 1986). The authorities, educational institutions, and other bodies involved in training and education shall provide equal opportunities for the educational and occupational advancement of women and men (Section 5, *ibid.*). Educational institutions shall pay special attention to equality in student selection, in teaching arrangements, and in the evaluation of studies, as well as to the policies that aim to prevent gender and sexual harassment and its elimination (Section 6, *ibid.*). Moreover, the law prohibits both immediate and indirect discrimination (Section 7, *ibid.*). Discrimination consists of sexual harassment and harassment based on one's gender, as well as any order or advice to conduct gender-based discrimination (*ibid.*). The act directly addresses employers and exerts pressure on them to take responsibility for ensuring the execution of the protection that the law entitles (Section 8d, *ibid.*). Employers' procedures are considered to be the type of discrimination prohibited by this law if they

abdicate their responsibility to use available measures to eliminate harassment after being informed about it (Act on Equality between Women and Men). In a case in which a victim of harassment feels that an educational institution has neglected its duty to take appropriate action to stop harassment, the law provides a measure for further action. The victim of harassment can claim compensation for discrimination from a district court under the Finnish Equality Act. In addition, harassers may be held liable under the Criminal Code of Finland and the Finnish Tort Liability Act. Harassment in a working environment can also be deemed to constitute discrimination in the workplace or a violation of the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act. In a case in which sexual harassment includes intentional violations of physical integrity, the provisions on assault and sexual offences governed by the Criminal Code of Finland may also apply (The Ombudsman for Equality).

In Finland, organizations – including higher education institutions – are under statutory obligation to draw up an equality plan – a document in which systematic attention is paid to the significance of gender in an organization. In order to ensure that gendered power relations become visible, equality plans publicize and clarify gender as a meaning, gender as an organizing principle within organizations, as well as gendered power relations. The 1995 reform of the Equality Act provided tools for actively engaging in equality practices. Those working within universities were provided legitimacy and tools by the Act to carry out equality work – an effort that is most concretely manifested in the drawing up of equality plans. This situation continues to pose a challenge to universities and their actors in terms of transforming methods and policies into more equality-based practices.

Recognizing inequality issues drives the concrete implementation and monitoring of equality plans. Equality work is supported by publicity, legislation, and decisions that demand conformance to considering gender equality in all decision making, planning, and implementation, as well as in the analysis of the effects of measures. This phenomenon is referred to as the mainstreaming of equality, and it requires a commitment by decision makers and planners to equality promotion as part of their tasks. To achieve this goal, these people must have sufficient basic knowledge about the state of equality. Such knowledge can be acquired through gender-segregated statistics, evaluations, and impact analyses. Thus, researchers and universities should be highly involved in such tasks.

Laws regulating gender politics in academia, such as gender equality laws, try to handle universities' autonomy with delicacy, attempting to combine administration and self-administration (Müller, 1999). Direct and indirect strategies are combined with a legal obligation for universities to write gender equality plans that are based on gender equality surveys. These strategies leave universities the freedom to carry them out and be responsible for the end result – to improve the realization of gender equality as stated in the Finnish Act on Gender Equality between Women and Men. The instruments and indicators to assess the actual improvements in gender equality are under development and focus merely on easily available

statistical information and therefore representational equality, which is important but not sufficient. Müller (1999) sees insufficiencies in the university driven autonomous approach to realize gender equality, an approach which also gives tremendous importance to the micropolitical level. Acker (2006) identifies and writes about the same problematics. She proposes a solution, according to which successful change projects that include gender equality and equal opportunity promotion and enactment seem to have three characteristics: 1) they are focused on a limited set of inequality-producing mechanisms; 2) they combine social movement and legislative support from outside the organization with active support from insiders; and 3) they involve coercion or sanction (Acker, 2006). That threat could be, for example, penalties for either an organization or an individual, or bad publicity or reputation.

Various feminist researchers work to identify not only structures that impede equality in universities but also cultures that legitimize these barriers. Some gender inequality issues, such as overt and covert discrimination as well as sexual harassment and sexism, are at least partially transformed into organizational issues and gender equality politics (Müller 2000). Müller's (2000) typology on higher education organizations' responses to gender equality politics distinguishes the following *structures and resources*: active formation, reluctant opening, passive tolerance, and factual prevention of effectiveness.

Grünberg (1999) identifies the requirements for *processes* that are needed to drive a significant effect on reducing sexual inequalities and to have an effective approach to gender equality in higher education. She points out the necessity to have gender-disaggregated statistics and gender-sensitive research to formulate the local gender equality problem. Climate may perhaps be the most challenging to measure, but it is an important central dimension in relation to gender equality. Grünberg (1999) refers to pedagogical initiatives and results in improving the educational atmosphere that supports gender equality in the classroom, initiatives that support the creation of space within universities where women can develop a sense of solidarity, and programmes that enable individuals to legally approach issues such as sexual harassment. Furthermore, the design and number of specialised gender-specific courses, as well as the institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies in universities, contribute to social change, thereby influencing the power structures within and outside higher education institutions (ibid.). Direct and indirect gender-based discrimination is an explicit area of legislation in various countries, including Finland. However, the implementation of policies has been lax, at least in the Finnish context, which is still missing compulsory training of university staff and students.

It was the Irish government that encouraged the European Commission to take the final steps towards producing a Union-wide initiative on sexual harassment (Collins, 1996). A specific sexual harassment directive was enforced by the EU in 2002 (Zippel, 2004). Article 2, No. 2 of the Equal Treatment Amendment Directive 2002/73/EC defines direct and indirect discrimination, as well as harassment and sexual harassment. The current common definition of sexual harassment is unwanted and one-sided

physical, verbal, or visual sexual behaviour in which sexuality and/or gender are used as a means of subordination, questioning, or control. It also involves the misuse of power to undermine another person (Sunnari, 2010; Sunnari et al., 2003). Gender harassment includes comments and jokes that imply stereotypic and discriminative attitudes. Sexual harassment includes unwanted physical or verbal sexual intentions that go against good manners (seductive behaviour) as well as sexual bribes, compelling, and coercion (Mankinen, 1995). In Finland, The Act on Equality between Women and Men classifies these forms of gender and sexual harassment as *gender discrimination*; these ideas are regarded in the present study as *sexist harassment*.

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) mandates that the EU and all of its member states provide equal treatment to all, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation (Rees 2007; Verloo, 2006). European Union (EU) politics has increased the need for sensitivity and intersectional analyses of sex, gender, race/ethnic origin, socio-economic background, disability, and age (e.g. Bagilhole, 2009; Van der Vleuten, 2007; Verloo, 2006; Yuval-Davies, 2006). Despite these efforts, however, equality perspective-based research on higher education institutions is confronted with the same challenge as are actual policies: It is categorical and misses the complexities of existing discrimination. Walby (2005) perceives that, in the contemporary development of gender mainstreaming policy, the EU has strengths in promoting it to the abstract level, but weaknesses in terms of implementation. Sexual harassment in European Higher Education institutions has been dealt with in various ways, depending on national legislation and university level policies. Prevention of sexual harassment and gender discrimination has been addressed in the European Council's recommendations. However, as Zippel (2004) presents in her study, employers' policy statements, complaints, procedures, and even preventive tools such as awareness campaigns and training sessions, are more inexpensive than initiatives devoted to gender equality issues, such as pay gaps, child care, and parental leaves. The policies against sexist harassment can also be considered cost-neutral or cost-effective because sexist harassment may lower productivity and increase the costs incurred from psychological and health problems (ibid.).

The sexual harassment intervention model by Hunt et al. (2010) divides sexual harassment policy implementation into three phases of intervention: primary intervention/prevention, secondary intervention/responding, and tertiary intervention/follow-up. Sexual harassment intervention is defined in policies that have a legislative basis. For successful implementation of the sexual harassment policies, the organization's management's commitment is necessary in all of the intervention phases. The intervention model (Hunt et al., 2010) could serve as a heuristic checklist for organizations developing their own intervention models for sexist harassment.

Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Research

Varsa (1996) classifies previous research on sexual harassment into three main discourses: human rights, based mainly in the US; socio-political,

based in central Europe; and welfare-state, based in Nordic countries. Oré-Aguilar (2001) presents a classification that resonates with Varsa's model, which categorises conceptual models of sexual harassment in three parts: the cultural values model, antidiscrimination model, and gender-based violence model. Since Kelly (1987) put forward her efforts, several feminist researchers have considered sexual harassment as one of the most common forms of discrimination in the sexual violence continuum (Husu, 2001; Sunnari, 2008; Sunnari et al., 2003, 2005; Thomas & Kizinger, 1997). While 'sexual harassment' is a term widely used in research, 'sexist harassment', the more extensive conceptualization of the phenomenon, is also used in research (e.g. Benokraitis, 1995, 1997; Husu, 2000, 2001; Silius, 1992; Sunnari, 2010).

Previous studies on this issue have noticed that some sexist harassment may remain invisible and unrecognized because people become accustomed to the harassment as something belonging to so-called 'normal' behaviour (Husu, 2001), or see it as an unavoidable part of communication with which one needs to cope (Sunnari et al., 2005). O'Connor (2000), based on her study in various Irish universities, argues that resistance towards gender discrimination or prejudice can be various in its kind: consciousness or action, structural or subjective determination, and either collective or individual engagement. Improvements in an organization's gender equality policies may provide space to report maltreatment, but it is crucial to draft policies that are sensitive to the multiplicity of various groups and individuals that are represented within organizations. Foreign background, race, citizenship, socio-economic background, and gender are significant in terms of one's social location. These signifiers together influence how a person or a group experience the protection provided by legislation or how meaningful such legislation is for them (Welsh et al., 2006). Similar results are reported on US campuses (Hill & Silva, 2005) and in international comparative research on sexual harassment of college students (Paludi et al., 2006) – individuals in some groups are not willing to report their harassment experiences. Additionally, more attention should be paid to age, because sexist harassment is particularly common towards young women as indicated in Finnish Gender Equality Barometer (Nieminen, 2008). However, positions of authority and power imbalance (Lee, 1998) in traditionally hierarchical organization, such as universities, are considered central when elaborating sexist harassment experiences, policy implementation of sexist harassment prevention, and its outcomes.

Research reveals that sexual harassment as a component of sexist harassment is rarely reported. Gender equality surveys conducted for staff in the University of Oulu indicate that harassment is recognized and named and that it happens (Rönkä, 2008). Some studies indicate that sexual harassment has not been reported because it has not been considered such a big problem (e.g. Hill & Silva, 2005, p. 36). Furthermore, people who have reported sexual harassment have encountered negative consequences from their colleagues or supervisors (Wilson & Thompson, 2001). It is worth examining the extent to which and the seriousness with which sexist harassment has been taken into consideration, or whether it is belittled or its existence denied entirely as part of decision-making processes concerning a

university's gender equality politics and discourses. Sexual harassment discourses are expressed, conceptualized, and functionalized in the central documents of the organization as a modification of desires, beliefs, concepts, and awareness, as well as deeper covert dimensions, such as ideologies, according to Wilson's and Thompson's (2001) study. Information campaigns aimed at preventing sexist harassment do not necessarily ensure the development of emancipatory knowledge that would enable positive change in a modern organization. The discourse of sexual harassment itself may produce conditions for sexist harassment by renewing the subject positions of the harassed and the harasser. Moreover, presenting harassment as a sexual activity may encourage some to think about harassment and to act in a harassing manner (Wilson & Thompson, 2001). Brewis, based on her 2001 study, presents the following dimensions in the sexual harassment discourse: talk about mutual desire, gendering, sexual essentialism, and heterosexism. Despite its narrow scope, sexual harassment discourse has been able to challenge and reinterpret life in organizations, thus clearly representing an attempt to intellectually capture the organization. Power may be discursive, but it is also political and has consequences, as Brewis (2001) states. In addition to bodily and discursive locations, intellectual location is also made through sexual harassment. Lee (1998) points out that, in terms of sexual harassment in PhD supervision, women are denied positions as fellow intellectuals and, instead, inappropriately gendered and made unwelcome in sexual ways.

In the university context, everyday practices may be oppressive, unfair, and isolative for certain groups of people. Inequality issues, such as barriers to participation, social structures, and gendered divisions of labour; the complexities of social positioning, gender, and class expectations; and psychic narratives/internalized oppression regarding worth, self-efficiency, and confidence, influence the validation and creation of knowledge (Morley, 2000). Findings from various studies indicate that exclusionary mechanisms in academia exist (e.g. Glover, 2000; Grünberg, 1999; Husu, 2001; Müller, 1999, 2000; O'Connor, 2000; Osborn et al., 2000;), and evidence-based arguments have provoked a concern about gender balance in decision making and about the complex idea of the gendered construction of scientific excellence (Rees, 2007). Discrimination in academia is a complex phenomenon and has complex consequences, because science is both a profession and a body of knowledge (Rees, 2007). According to Rolin (2000), equality in academia would create better opportunities for scientific dialogue and, therefore, increase the objectivity of scientific knowledge (Rolin, 2000).

Gender equality has received considerable attention within this general development (e.g. Rees, 2007), and some studies have been carried out to identify the barriers to gender equality within higher education institutions in Europe (Bagilhole, 2000; Glover, 2000; Grünberg, 1999; Husu, 2001; Mackinnon & Brooks, 2001; Müller, 1999, 2000; O'Connor, 2000; Osborn et al., 2000). Apart from Europe, Australia and North America have initiated vigorous academic discussions about sexual harassment policies and policy development (Bacci, 1999, 1998, 1994; Bacci & Jose, 1994; Saguy, 2002, 2003; Zippel, 2003, 2004, 2006;), and this issue is important in African,

Asian, and South American universities as well (e.g. Paludi et al., 2006). Sexist harassment is one of the barriers to equal access, inclusion, participation, and promotion; it maintains a hostile climate in academia.

In Finnish universities, sexual harassment has been studied foremost as a part of gender equality surveys conducted for gender equality plans (Kantola, 2005; Mankkinen, 1995, 1999; Naskali, 2004; Sinkkonen, 1997; Varjus, 1997). Other types of sexual harassment research have been conducted. There are, however, a few notable examples. Husu (2001) examines sexual harassment at eleven Finnish universities as hidden discrimination. Katja Björklund (2010), in her dissertation, examines stalking and sexual harassment experienced by university students.

At the University of Oulu, sexual harassment has been an area of research. Through data collected from students on various occasions, prevalence as well as shifts in forms of harassment have been elaborated (Rautio et al., 1999, 2005; Sunnari et al., 2005). Students' experiences of study burdens and abuse were studied in the 1990s. According to two studies, 17 per cent of the students responding to the survey (n=665) had experienced sexual harassment (Rautio et al., 2005; Sunnari et al., 2005). In the most recent gender equality survey for staff conducted in 2008, out of all respondents (n=377), about 10 per cent had experienced insulting innuendos, 'dirty talk' or sexually suggestive jokes.

Studies that have been conducted on the area in relation to universities cover sexual harassment, campus violence, discrimination, and the implementation of sexual harassment policies from power and discourse perspectives. However, what has not been done sufficiently are more holistic studies on sexist harassment as an issue of university organizations' gender equality politics, policies, and actual gender equality work, as well as longitudinal case studies aiming to understand the changes, improvements, and the difficulties of such processes as part of organizational culture and community challenges.

Research Data

The examination focuses on key materials. Between the years 1990 and 2010, nine separate studies dealing with student maltreatment, the burdens of study, gender equality among the personnel, and the gender and sexual harassment experiences of students and personnel were conducted at the University of Oulu. All nine studies, each with separate data, included writings on sexist harassment experienced and encountered in the university. Just those parts that explicitly address gender and sexual harassment have been selected for analysis. This harassment data enabled critical identification of the shortcomings of gender equality policies focusing on sexist harassment.

Also, only the most central gender equality policy documents of the University of Oulu from the years 1997-2010 have been selected for analysis. This body of data includes three gender equality plans and

guidelines of the University of Oulu regarding situations of gender and sexual harassment published between 2001 and 2009. From these policies those sections that explicitly referred to gender and sexual harassment were examined more closely. The aim was to create a picture of the understanding of the phenomenon among the university's gender equality policymakers – how gender and sexual harassment is defined, and to whom the policies are addressed.

The purpose of this study is to point out gaps in knowledge and the need to develop further policies (Yin, 2009). Therefore, this case study does not aim at generalizations but aims to further policy discussion on the matter based on the research results presented in the following chapter.

Addressing an Ideology of Sexist Discrimination within an Organization

The results clearly indicate that, in terms of sexual and gender harassment, what students experience at university is rather a question of sexist attitudes and practices, a hostile environment, and discrimination. Furthermore, the question is about an organizational culture that tolerates sexism, which also becomes normalized and, at least situationally, is established as the dominating one. All of these factors are in line with the definition of sexism. *Sexism* is defined as an ideology of sex and gender supremacy to which constructions of gender and sexuality are central. Sexism refers to identifiable attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices that interrelate and that affect individuals' lives. Sexism limits our possibilities and personhood, i.e., in Nussbaum's terminology, our human capabilities. In addition to individual-level prejudices, organizational and structural levels also characterize discrimination and, therefore, 'sexism' captures the comprehensive, systemic nature of these phenomena.

Because of the systematic nature of the characteristics of gender and sexual harassment in terms of attitudes, practices, and policies that appeared in the case study, I came to the conclusion that, as a phenomenon, they have to be based on individual-level decision-making and, more profoundly, on a more general level of ideological definitions. Therefore, the concepts of sexist harassment should rather be used in harassment cases and, when talking about the general phenomenon, it should be referred to as 'sexist discrimination'. Sexist harassment has not been an area of sufficient focus in policy formulation, nor has it been successfully considered in institutional policies. As Epstein (1997) argues, the question in sexist harassment cases is not solely about sexuality itself but about an ideology of sex and gender supremacy that is intertwined with heterosexism and a hierarchy of various identity signifiers and related cultural behaviours. Furthermore, sexist harassment is a useful term while researching, discussing, and developing policies. In addition, the term 'sexist harassment' indicates an ideology related to the phenomenon that is parallel to other forms of discrimination such as racism, classism, able-bodiedism, etc.

Sexist discrimination is a question and a concern of gender equality politics and policies at university whose elimination requires further consideration. Potential issues such as sexist harassment may be kept out of politics through the operation of social forces, institutional practices, or individual decisions. According to the sexist harassment data, both strategies— institutional practices and individual decisions—are used to keep sexist harassment off the organizational policy agenda, either consciously or unconsciously. When harassment appears, reactions to it may vary: it may be silenced, belittled, ridiculed, tolerated, or repeated. Sexist discrimination may be reasonably considered a key issue in the area of gender equality politics within the university. This study supports the results of previous studies of various discursive power struggles on sexual harassment (Hill & Silva, 2005; Welsh, 2006; Wilson & Thompson, 2001) labelling individual experience as such. Belittling of the actual harassment may be seen as an attempt to prevent a possible key issue from coming into the organizational decision-making area in academia, and resulting in 'a non-event' and, respectively, non-decision-making (Pincus, 2002), the second dimension of power (Lukes, 2005). The biggest threat seems to be an organization's power in academia, which prohibits gender equality issues, including sexist harassment, from becoming a key issue in the political decision-making area; this results in a lack of adequate resources for sexist harassment prevention, response, and follow-up. Therefore, it is important that this be given further consideration. The question is one of organizational resources. During the entire research process, three issues have repeatedly appeared in relation to policy development: (1) support for victims of harassment, (2) prevention of sexist harassment, and (3) education on sexist harassment and gender equality. The situation now, at the end of this research, remains the same as it was at the beginning with regard to these three above mentioned issues, i.e. they are under-developed and under-resourced. Table 1 summarizes areas in which the university needs to further consider sexist harassment, and it identifies which areas need to be improved.

The research results of this study also support the idea that sexist harassment prevention measures should operate on individual, collective, organizational, and managerial levels (e.g. Hagman & Hearn, 1999). Despite very limited resources, gender equality actors in the case of the university have some clear accomplishments: they have increased awareness of sexual harassment, created guidelines for gender and sexual harassment in Finnish and English, developed grievance procedures, with staff in each of the six faculties being involved at least to a certain extent in gender equality work resulting in its own unique organization, collaborated with the student union, and established a continuity of gender equality work for almost two decades now. This study indicates that gender equality work in order to improve equality at the university is a long-term commitment both for the individual and for the organization. It is important to examine more closely how gender equality work can be best arranged within each type of organization. We need more knowledge about how gender equality work fits into each type of organization. What role does the organization play in gender equality work? If the organization has a tendency to outsource various kinds of tasks that are not considered to be their core areas of activity or expertise, are they more apt to use external resources, e.g., equality consultants, for

gender equality work as well, instead of building their own internal capabilities and competencies in gender equality issues? Sustainability in organizational gender equality issues would require consideration of gender mainstreaming as one of the areas of core competency among the staff, including the university administration. For students, this would require knowledge of gender equality issues with the aim to become active participants in the university organization, including using its gender equality policies and getting involved in its gender equality politics.

Shortcomings	Proposals for improvement
Sexist atmosphere not sufficiently addressed	Zero tolerance to all forms of sexist harassment
Ambivalent understanding of the concepts of harassment and normalisation of the phenomenon	Education for students and staff, research, gender mainstreaming in policymaking
Emotional difficulties of taking action against the harasser	Improvement of policies and support services to consider power differences
Borderline places and spaces	Including borderline areas in the policy in an attempt to cover them properly
Focusing on the individual instead of the institution	Including a university culture and community approach to preventive measures
Ineffective implementation	Resources
Difficulties in measuring prevalence	Indicators
Singular identity-based equality policy	Intersectional approach
	Applying a human capabilities approach to overall equality politics

Table 1. *Reconstructing sexist harassment prevention policies in the university*

Developing Gender Equality Work Further at Universities

A longitudinal case study analysed from the perspective of the theory of gendered organizations provides in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon. One of the central aims of the study was to reveal the complexity of the lived experience of gender in/equality in the university organization in order to develop organizational policies that more closely address individuals' needs. In the data, the voices of those who have experienced sexist harassment are the key to evaluating the current policies and identifying their deficiencies. Policy recommendations are another focal point in discussing the research results.

In this research the researched phenomenon is approached from various angles, namely individual, communal, and organizational, and through

various data experiences, namely policies and education, resulting in an insight into how these policies in relation to sexist harassment are implemented within the university organization. How do the policies cover the reality, and what are their deficiencies and strengths? Furthermore, how does the gender equality machinery within the university organization function, and where might it be more operative? However, those who harass have not been taken into consideration. That could have provided some interesting viewpoints, but it has been covered to a certain extent elsewhere (e.g. Husu, 2001).

Sexist harassment and other forms of gender and sexual violence are problems in the realization of human rights and human capabilities that require concerted action internationally, nationally, and locally. To eliminate sexist harassment and discrimination requires more consideration in higher education institutions. These rights, responsibilities, and capabilities are both individual and institutional, and institutions are in a primary position to provide a setting for their realization and further development. A comprehensive sexist harassment policy for higher education has yet to emerge, and for that purpose Acker's (1990, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2006) theory of gendered organizations and Nussbaum's (2000a, 2000b, 2005) capabilities approach provide promising theoretical grounding. The capabilities approach has the potential to consider equal rights and mutual respect. Theoretical methodological development, the importance of conducting research on one's own location or organization (e.g. Acker, 1990, 1992, 2006), and applying a capabilities approach in that location (Nussbaum, 2000a, 2000b), while being sensitive to unavoidable partiality and making partiality transparent in empirical research, means realizing the principles of strong objectivity. These are epistemological requirements that are also related to the feminist standpoint, and are laid out by Harding (1987, 1991, 2004, 2008). Despite their complexity, intertwined concepts of gender, sexuality, and intersectionality have a core value for feminist studies and policy development in relation to sexist harassment. A combination of Acker's and Nussbaum's theoretical work results in a useful grounding for an organization's equality work. The theory of gendered organizations provides a framework to evaluate equality from an organizational dimension, and the list of central human capabilities serves as a specific indicator to evaluate the actual realization of equality from an individual's point of view. Therefore, this theoretical combination and formulation posits the possibility of a transformative and empowering policy implementation in the complex area of gender equality.

Sexist harassment may be viewed as an organizational failure to secure the realization of individuals' bodily integrity. The study provides some evidence that sexist harassment has a negative influence on the realization of the university's main tasks, namely knowledge production and learning. As an insult to one's bodily integrity, it also has a negative impact on other human capabilities.

It seems that the human capabilities approach helps to pay attention to the organizational conditions that frame people's actions in their everyday lives. Therefore, the human capabilities approach provides an interesting

philosophical underpinning for further development of the university and gender equality politics at the university to become more inclusive, equal, and respectful.

Furthermore, the capabilities approach clearly promotes and provides practical tools for the intersectional policy-making that Verloo and Lombardo (2007) call for. Fear of sexist harassment deserves special consideration in educational institutions from pre-school to higher education. However, the policies and practices preventing such violence are under-developed. Education and training on gender equality issues and policies within the university are rarely available for students and staff. In equality work, it is important to consider both formal representational equality and substantial functional equality and, furthermore, to consider more closely the intersections and conditions that influence individual access, participation, success, and conditions for knowledge production. Equality work should address and ensure the realisation of human capabilities.

I conclude here that gender is connected to active participation and is experienced within academia. Students and staff encounter sexist harassment in universities, which may compromise their intellectual aspirations in addition to their well-being. Gender-based violence does exist in various forms in and outside of academia, and also requires further consideration in terms of renewal of legislation (e.g. Feasibility study, 2012). However, a challenge for gender equality work is to consider the embodiment, sexuality, and bodily integrity of all individuals as important, so that bodily capabilities are not questioned and the need for their protection is not disregarded in higher education institutions.

Universities should take a more rigorous approach to combating discrimination by using their areas of expertise – conducting research, producing more adequate conceptualisations on gender equality phenomena, providing education and training, and developing innovations for ensuring gender equality and social justice. The university should use its autonomy, methodological expertise, and capabilities to conceptualise, to theorize, and to conduct research on sexist harassment, which seems to be one of its continuing concerns around inequality. Clearly, elaboration from an intersectional perspective is needed and should be further developed. Furthermore, this should also be done in order to provide higher education training and teaching about gender equality on the university's premises. Guaranteeing equality for all individuals in universities is the responsibility of higher education organizations, based on the current legislation, international conventions, and resolutions.

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