

'Why Do All the Women Disappear?' Gendering Processes in a Political Science Department

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The article provides an in-depth analysis of the gendering processes among PhD candidates in a political science department. It uses Joan Acker's theory of gendered organizations operating through four dimensions: the gendered division of labour, gendered interaction, gendered symbols and gendered interpretations of one's position in the organization. The article combines this approach with theories of hidden discrimination. The key theoretical aim is to contribute to gendered organizational theory by examining the ways in which hidden discrimination and the gendered organization work together. This generates detailed and differentiated knowledge about the mechanisms of hidden discrimination that produce gender inequalities in the department. The findings presented in this article point to the role of gendered division of labour and the lack of information about departmental practices. PhD supervision by men is a particularly strong structural barrier for women because of the gendered nature of interaction in supervision and the difficulties that female PhD students have in a male-dominated environment. The article further contributes to debates on gendered organizations by focusing upon the gendered symbols of expertise in political science. These symbols reproduce the man as the political scientist norm and result in women interpreting their own position as marginal or as outsiders.

Keywords: gendered organizations, women in academia, political science, hidden discrimination

For some time now, students and lecturers in a political science department in Finland have been asking, 'where do all the women disappear to?' The question is apposite. In 2004–2005, men held all the teaching posts. All the professors, senior lecturers and lecturers were men. Women were indeed

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disappearing: while women constituted 38 per cent of the PhD candidates only 18 per cent who actually obtained their doctorates were women. Furthermore, for nearly 20 years over 50 per cent of the undergraduates had been women. While many male students stayed on in the department, most women left. The uniquely male composition of the staff, contrasting with the gender balance that exists at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, seemed to require explanation.¹

There are two other features that set the context for this article. The first is that this low representation of women differs from their presence in Finnish parliamentary politics, where women have reached a 41.5 per cent representation in Parliament and a 60 per cent representation in government. The position of women in the academia generally also appears to be good when compared to other European Union member states (Husu, 2002a, p. 149). There is a pervasive belief that the Nordic countries have come the furthest in Europe and potentially in the world in promoting gender equality. Finnish society is characterized by the idea that gender equality has already been achieved, despite the fact that studies from various fields show otherwise (Holli *et al.*, 2002). This article shows that women's position in political science effectively challenges this hegemonic view. The second is that the lack of women in political science is a persistent international phenomenon that has been well documented in a number of recent texts (Ahtela *et al.*, 2005; Hesli and Burrell, 1995; Sarkees and McGlen, 1992, 1999). Yet, this has not resulted in either an international or a national outcry and the situation seems to go unnoticed. This article questions this state of affairs and highlights the importance of the issue for the discipline, its institutions and individual scholars.

The aim of this article is to explore not where women 'disappear' to but why they disappear, by providing an in-depth analysis of the gendering processes in a political science department in relation to its PhD candidates. It uses Joan Acker's (1990, 1992) theory of gendered organizations operating through four dimensions: the gendered division of labour, gendered interaction, gendered symbols and gendered interpretations of one's position in the organization. This approach is combined with theories of hidden discrimination (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995; Husu, 2001). The key theoretical aim is to contribute to gendered organizational theory by examining the ways in which hidden discrimination and gendered organization work together. This generates detailed and differentiated knowledge about the mechanisms of hidden discrimination that produce gender inequalities in the department.

Previous research on women in academia has shown that structural factors that reproduce men's dominance hinder women's career aspirations in universities. Key features that contribute to women's slow career development include unofficial flows of information, the invisibility of women to their male colleagues, disrespect of women's scientific merit, the segregation of women's and men's jobs and the difficult position of young female

researchers (Academy of Finland, 1998; Bagilhole and Goode, 2001; Brouns, 2001; Fogelberg *et al.*, 1999; Husu, 2001; Lie and Malik, 1996; *Naisten tutkijanuran ongelmat ja esteet*, 1986; Stolte-Heiskanen, 1991; Tripp-Knowles, 1995). The findings in this article point to the role of gendered division of labour and lack of information as reasons why women disappear from the department. Nevertheless, the article suggests that PhD supervision by men is a particularly strong structural barrier for women. The gendered nature of interaction is highlighted in supervision and the difficulties that female PhD students have in a male-dominated environment come to the fore. The article further contributes to debates on gendered organizations by focusing upon the gendered symbols of expertise in political science. These symbols reproduce the man as the political scientist norm and result in women interpreting their own position as marginal or as outsiders.

Methodological and theoretical considerations

This article draws upon a larger research project carried out in 2004–2005 that focused upon undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as the staff (Kantola, 2005). The department in question is a major political science department in the country's key university. The university has a gender equality policy and its gender equality committee funded the project. I came into the project from outside the Finnish context, having obtained my doctorate in the UK. Many people in the department thought that this was an advantage, as it would make my research more 'objective' and thus more 'scientific', as I was not enmeshed in the departmental practices.

My theoretical field — feminism — was, in contrast, seen as somewhat more problematic. Many political scientists in the department regarded feminism as an ideology, rather than an approach to political science and a political theory. This had some consequences for the reception of my research: while few could refute the statistical findings, they rejected the (feminist) theories that were used to analyse them.

I gathered survey data from the PhD students in the summer of 2004. The questionnaire was answered by 42 PhD students, of whom 18 were women and 23 men.² I subsequently interviewed 13 PhD students, eight women and five men.³ Due to the small size of the research community under scrutiny it was agreed that only the gender of the interviewees would be given in the quotations used here in order to protect their identity. Methodologically, this article uses text analysis inspired by discourse analysis to discuss the findings. Thus, the statements of the interviewees are not to be seen as reflections of reality but as texts produced in the interviews to construct a certain reality (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). A discourse analysis-inspired interpretation of the research material requires them to be read as material constructed in a cultural context (Wetherell and Potter, 1988, p. 169). Similarly the researcher is always

part of these contexts and discourses. Nevertheless, the aim of the article is not to provide a detailed discourse analysis, but rather to map the dominant themes that emerged from the interviews and that shed light on the gendered character of the organization and the processes of discrimination.

Although the project studied the experiences of undergraduate students and the staff as well as the PhD students, the experiences of the female PhD students stood out as pivotal. Three reasons speak for focusing upon them in this article. Firstly, while it was not possible to compare the differences between women's and men's experiences among the staff (as there were and had been so few women), this was possible with the PhD students. The results show striking differences between women's and men's experiences. Secondly, unlike in the USA, it is common in Finland for scholars to stay in the same department that they graduate from. Thus, the ways in which a department treats its PhD students shapes its future staff (Elg and Jonnergård, 2003). Finally, an academic career does not start after obtaining a doctorate, but by building networks, participating in conferences and publishing in academic journals during postgraduate studies (Husu, 2001, p. 46). These reasons motivated a closer scrutiny of the PhD students' experiences.

A few context-specific qualifications are in order, however. The practices of PhD supervision in Finland are in general very patchy. No firm practices exist and there is great local variation. The country is moving from a traditional model, where scholars obtained a PhD towards the end of their career, to a more Anglo-American system of graduate schools, close supervision and tight time-frames for graduation. In addition, academic careers in general in Finland are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. There is no tenure track, few job openings and few permanent positions below the full professorial level. These factors make it difficult for both women and men to embark on an academic career. This article is concerned only with the gendered dimensions of these uncertainties and processes.

The article is structured around and contributes to theories of gendered organizations. Joan Acker (1990, pp. 146–7, 1992, pp. 252–4) distinguishes four dimensions of the process by which gender differences and hierarchies are constantly produced and reproduced. These are the gendered division of labour, gendered interaction, gendered symbols and gendered interpretations of one's position in the organization.⁴ In Finland Liisa Husu has applied this approach to gender-based discrimination in academia and my analysis is greatly inspired by her work (Husu, 2001, pp. 49–55). Rather than critiquing it, my aim here is to positively contribute to her work and to explore its implications in a context of a male-dominated political science department.

In Acker's theory different gender hierarchies are first produced through an unofficial gendered division of labour. For example, in a university organization, the women's role might be to act as 'mothers of the department': by creating a comfortable atmosphere, making coffee and organizing different social events. These tasks are little valued in the academic world and attract

little scientific credit in terms of career development. The gender pay gap also reflects this unofficial division of labour and the values attached to it. Secondly, theories of gendered organization highlight the ways in which interaction and communication is gendered. A number of studies have drawn attention to the ways in which universities function on the basis of tacit knowledge (Fox, 1991; Husu, 2001; Stolte-Heiskanen, 1991). In such organizational cultures, men's insider networks for interaction and for transmitting information are emphasized. Part of gendered interaction entails gendered evaluations of scientific success — so that the work of women and men might be evaluated in different ways (Brouns, 2001).

Thirdly, gendered symbols, images and forms of consciousness also are part of the way a gendered organization works. Different male heroes, gentlemen's clubs and men's networks are examples of these. Language can produce gendered images and academic titles, such as 'masters' and 'fellows', carry a masculine sign (Husu, 2001, p. 52). Finally, women's and men's ways of interpreting their positions and chances in the university and at the departmental level are part of the way a gendered organization works (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988, p. 18; Davis, 1997, p. 188). Women might, for example, think that their marginal position in a masculine departmental culture is the result of their own choice, or they can become depressed when their successes are not valued in this culture. Men, in turn, can interpret their position in similar situations differently, for example, by seeing themselves as heroes or individual achievers.

Acker's approach has been critiqued for being too essentialist, in that it renders all organizations as 'inherently gendered': they are 'defined, conceptualized, and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity, and ... will thus inevitably reproduce gendered differences' (Britton, 2000, pp. 419, 421–3). In my view, the criticism is justified. There is a sense in Acker's work that organizations are essentially patriarchal and immutable. Yet this limitation does not prevent us as scholars from using her four dimensions as empirical tools, even if we depart from the theoretical idea that organizations that exhibit gendered patterns are male or masculine in some essential, inherent manner. Rather, when used as empirical tools these dimensions might in fact point to variations in the extent to which and the ways in which different organizations are gendered (Alvesson and Due Billing, 1997).

This article combines Acker's theory of gendered organizations with notions of overt and hidden discrimination, an approach also used by Liisa Husu (2001). Overt discrimination is often, but not always, intentional, visible and at times easy to document. Examples include the gender pay gap and physical violence. Some scholars place sexual harassment in this category, although it rarely is easy to document (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995, p. 39; cf. Husu, 2001, p. 57). Sanctioning overt discrimination in state legislation has in some cases led to a situation where gender-based discrimination takes more subtle and hidden forms, so that perceiving it, talking about it and

intervening in it become more difficult (Husu, 2002b, p. 151).⁵ Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) differentiate between subtle and covert discrimination, both of which are less visible than overt discrimination. In an organization both may be internalized as normal, natural and acceptable behaviour and action. The individual discriminated against may experience discriminating practices as offensive, while the person doing the discriminating may find them amusing and harmless. Subtle discrimination can take the form of hidden isolation. Examples include challenging one's expertise, downplaying and downgrading research, and diminution of accomplishments (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995, p. 128; Husu, 2001, p. 63). Stalling and containment of women's careers also constitute dimensions of covert discrimination. Husu has combined these two forms of discrimination into one: hidden discrimination, which becomes the counterpart to overt discrimination (2001, p. 15). This useful conceptualization is consequently used in this article as well.

When exploring the gendered character of the department, this article is interested about the ways in which the gendered dimensions of organizational practices (Acker's theory) and processes of discrimination work together. The article explores how the processes of gendered organization and gender-based discrimination are intertwined and mutually reinforce one another. The aim is to survey different structural factors that reproduce gender discrimination and to show that gendered interaction — supervision — and gendered symbols are particularly powerful, if little analysed, in relation to women in political science.

These are the key contributions of the article. Internationally, there is a considerable literature on women in academia, but postgraduate supervision has not been studied extensively from a gender perspective (Conrad, 1994; Hammick and Acker, 1998). Yet, supervision often forms the key form of interaction for PhD students who are only rarely a part of a team or meaningful student cohort in the social sciences or humanities. They mostly work in a one-to-one relationship with their supervisor while developing their own critical thinking (Deem and Brehony, 2000, p. 150). Gender is an important element of such supervisory relationships that are rarely monitored (Leonard, 1997). In this article, it was impossible to examine the relationship between the advisor's gender and the PhD student's satisfaction with the supervision, because only two of the students who responded to the survey (5 per cent) had a female advisor. Thus, the focus on supervision meant looking into what it meant for women and men respectively to be supervised by men. This draws attention to the intersections of gender, supervision and political science.

Teaching: a man's job

Gender differences and hierarchies are produced through a gendered division of labour that defines women's and men's jobs and the different

values attached to them. In this study, the gendered division of labour could be seen in relation to teaching and recruitment. Teaching became defined as a men's job, although the survey showed that both women and men were interested in teaching. While 25 per cent of male respondents gained both information about teaching opportunities and encouragement to teach from their advisors, none of the female respondents had obtained any information or encouragement to teach. During the academic year 2004–2005, the department offered 23 courses taught by the department's PhD candidates. Women taught two (9 per cent) and men 21 (91 per cent) of these courses. Women did not know about teaching at the department:

The threshold to make an offer to teach at the department is incredibly high. Somehow I have a feeling that 'it's none of my business, I have no right to, it's for the other students'. (Woman)

I had no idea that one could offer to teach a course at the department... I had always thought that people were asked to teach ... I had no idea. Information about things like this could be better transmitted, like you could clearly let the PhD students know, it's really important the chance to teach and I'm sure it would be good for the department too. (Woman)

No, no one ever asked me if I wanted to teach. That would've been great. I would've enjoyed it, but I would have never dared to suggest it myself. (Woman)

I asked if there was something that I could participate in, and I was recommended to do invigilation. I thought that even that was fun, participating in department's activities. (Woman)

Female PhD students keen to teach felt that it would have provided them with valuable work experience and integrated them in the scientific community. Yet, as the interviews above show, these women were not given information about teaching possibilities or, as the last quotation illustrated, some had been offered less challenging jobs, such as invigilation, instead. The men's experiences differed significantly from the women's:

And then I have been thinking about teaching a course on my PhD topic... I have already discussed that with my advisor. (Man)

I was offered a course that I could teach. (Man)

They helped me a lot with that teaching offer. The course was changed so that it addressed the themes of my research. (Man)

Through teaching I've had this experience that I have contributed something to the department, and that I have been able to participate in the department's activities. (Man)

I always talked with the professors about a chance to teach and they suggested that I'd teach a course on this topic. They helped me to design the course. I'm really excited about it. (Man)

Many of these men had been encouraged to teach and they had been given more information about teaching than the women. These interviews also highlighted the meaning of teaching for PhD students. Teaching made these men feel that they belonged to the department and were part of its scientific community. Through teaching the men also gained visibility and prestige on their own topics and expertise. In this way, teaching legitimated their research and position in the department. While teaching might be feminized in some contexts, here it was a man's job: a chance for men to present their research and put forward their understanding of the study of politics. Notably some women had worked as teaching assistants in the department and a few women had taught their own courses. These cases may even add to the persistence of gender inequalities, because they can be used to refute the general tendency that teaching was a man's job.

Almost all the interviews illustrate that the women saw the department's recruitment practices as discriminatory. The long-term policy was that short-term contracts were not open for competition, but the department appointed someone 'they know' for these one- or two-year lectureships. Yet numerous studies show that women have a better chance of being appointed in open than in closed competition (European Technology Assessment Network, 2000, p. 31). Recruitment that is not transparent and where workers are chosen from a small, closed (in this case male) circle can result in two forms of gender discrimination: containment and stalling (Husu, 2001, p. 155). This is exacerbated if women are largely invisible to those in the positions of power:

When you look at it, it comes forward as shockingly clear favouritism towards men in recruitment practices. (Woman)

All of the names that ever come up are men's. (Woman)

On many occasions there would have been women who could have been chosen. (Woman)

Women are only used as research assistants but never chosen to be lecturers. (Woman)

It's so depressing, because there are always these 'favourites' who benefit from this system and make progress in their careers. (Woman)

It's a very nice arrangement if you are an insider in the small circle. (Woman)

They have always been against recruiting outsiders. (Woman)

A key challenge to gender equality in Finland is the strong horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market. Some interviewees recognized the problem in the department: women were appointed as research assistants, but not as lecturers. When asked to describe recruitment practices the women used terms such as 'favouritism', 'insiders', 'small circle' and 'discrimination'. They argued that jobs were given out to those who were already part of the inner circle. Women were not included in these male networks but rather occupied the position of outsiders. Non-events, forgetting and invisibility are forms of hidden discrimination (Husu, 2001, p. 122, 2005, p. 172). None of the interviewed women had been asked to take up a short-term contract job, while two of the men interviewed had been offered jobs. This is one way of reproducing male dominance and of marginalizing women outside the scientific community. On the basis of the interviews conducted both with the PhD students and the staff it can be argued that the department did not make any efforts to actively challenge the gendered division of labour.

Gendered interaction and self-supervising women

PhD supervision stood out as an example of gendered interaction and played an important role in producing gender hierarchies. The results of the survey show that supervisory practices and graduate seminars support men rather than women. Although approximately half the PhD students were satisfied with the supervision, support and the graduate seminars, there were clear differences among the women and the men, with the women being more critical about the supervision, support and guidance. The interviews generated similar findings:

It was really lonely. I was given no support in the beginning. (Woman)

The advisor said that well, this is interesting, but there's nothing that I could contribute or say about it. (Woman)

The advisor knows nothing about my topic and has no expertise in it. He's said to me many times, 'I know nothing about these themes', and anyway I would've needed some advice [from the supervisor] and authority. (Woman)

I wouldn't have wanted to meet up with my advisor any more than this, because it's useless talking to him. The advisor did not know how to supervise me. It was a waste of time to go and sit there for an hour, because I got nothing out of it. But otherwise I would've wanted to meet my advisors more often, if only I had had qualified advisors. (Woman)

Well, you could say that I received no advice whatsoever. Sometimes [name] has asked me 'how are you doing now', you know, when we've met

in the corridor or something, and that has pretty much been it. (Woman)

The atmosphere [in the supervisory meetings] was friendly, perhaps a bit distanced ... you somehow think that either this is not interesting at all to the advisor or that he's somehow holding back his comments, because this is probably so bad; this thing that I have written, perhaps he thinks that this is totally hopeless, this whole thing. (Woman)

These women had the experience of getting inadequate supervision. Their problems included a lack of basic supervision and the advisors' lack of expertise on their topics which resulted in their inability to comment upon their work. Their supervision consisted of brief inquiries in the corridor about how they were doing, or vague chats. The supervision did not include new perspectives on the PhD work, discussions about the progress in the work or its direction, and neither did it involve advice about the practices of the academic world. On the contrary, men's experiences about PhD supervision were very different:

Yeah, there was a lot of support ... mainly arranging different opportunities. (Man)

He was always a support for me, took care of my things and stood up for me. (Man)

Both women and men have been supported a lot at the department. (Man)

[Supervision] means comments on my work, argumentation, what are the strengths of the paper, what should be modified, and of course tips about references that I should use. (Man)

My advisor told me about different opportunities, encouraged me to apply and helped me with the application. (Man)

In this way, the interviews support the survey results that pointed to men's better experiences about their supervision practices. Men brought up the advisor's lack of time as the only problem with supervision. These results are very similar to those of other studies (Ahtela, 2004, p. 6; *Doktorandspegeln*, 2003). Research into gender equality at the Faculty of Law in the University of Helsinki showed that satisfaction with supervision and support was clearly gendered, as 14 per cent of the women and 41 per cent of the men found their supervision satisfactory (Ahtela, 2004, p. 6). That study distinguished different types of male PhD students: those who got extremely good supervision, those who were supported by research networks, and those who were independent heroes and did not feel that they needed supervision or support (Ahtela, 2004, p. 8). Many of the men interviewed in this study could be categorized into these groups, but due to the small number of those interviewed it is impossible to develop this argument in this article.

The lack of supervision experienced by women is one form of hidden discrimination; containment. This places women and men in a different position in terms of carrying out their postgraduate studies. Furthermore, it reduces women's chances of making progress in their research careers and it may lock them out of the scientific community. The lack of supervision is an example of Husu's non-events, silence and invisibility that are dimensions of hidden discrimination (2001, p. 122, 2005, p. 173). Non-events include, for instance, forgetting, insensitivity and lack of attention. The women interviewed gave examples of such non-events: not being greeted in the corridors, not receiving replies to their e-mail inquiries and not being invited to certain events. Non-events in supervision are an effective way of leaving women on their own and reproducing gender hierarchies that privilege men. The interview data on research seminars showed that they privilege masculinities, not just men. Women described a masculine argumentation culture where the objective was not to provide constructive criticisms and comments but rather aggressively show that one is better than others. Indeed, one woman stated that she had become 'self-supervising':

Somehow I feel that I have lately become fairly 'self-supervising' and I feel that I am very active, I have learnt ... I don't want any supervision any more, a strange reversal. (Woman)

Others said:

I have always been very independent and have tried to find out about things myself, no one has ever said anything like: read that journal or that paper or anything like that. (Woman)

All the knowledge and information has just come to me from different places. It's never been part of the supervision, like you might imagine. (Woman)

I think that I have learnt the most from the other PhD students. I lean on them for support. (Woman)

These women were active in searching for information and contacts, which challenges any portrayals of them as passive. It is notable, however, that they searched for the information and networks from outside the department. Information about publication opportunities and conferences had to be obtained from elsewhere when it did not come from the advisors. These women gained more support, for example, from other PhD students than from their advisors. Research on Finnish universities has shown that those lower in the organizational hierarchy, and women in particular, do not get access to the information that affects their work (Naskali, 2004, p. 20). Therefore, female researchers often compensate for the research networks that are lacking from their own departments with international contacts or support networks from outside the university (Husu, 2001, pp. 199–204). Previous

research has also shown that while women have to actively create new networks to gain support and information, men can make use of old, long-established networks (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001, p. 171). These networks, however, were not only a source of support but also of scientific merit and they did help some of the women later on in their careers.

'Real' political science meets 'playing around'

Gendered symbols could be seen to operate on two levels. They define both what is legitimate political science and what a proper political scientist looks like. Both definitions were based on masculine norms. The argument here is that gendered symbols had discriminatory effects and resulted in professional diminution of women and challenging their expertise in political science. One of the key contributions of feminism to scholarship has been to broaden the notion of the political and the range of topics that can be studied as politics (Randall, 2002; Squires, 1999). Nevertheless, many women stated that their broad notion of politics was marginalized in a department that favoured traditional political science.

The advisor could not understand what my topic had to do with political science. (Woman)

We've had no teaching about the so-called new politics. It's pretty traditional, the politics that they teach here. (Woman)

I've had this worry that it is not very wise to start my research career with this kind of a topic. (Woman)

... very strong views exist about whose work is nice academic playing around, and who is doing real political science, that has some societal relevance. (Woman)

Interviewer: What is this real political science?

... It's something that you can apply, I mean, that you have to research the real world, and there has to be use for the research outside the university. It's got nothing to do with epistemological or theoretical questions, but it's very straightforward. (Woman)

The department gives the impression that it is foreign policy, security, election studies, and administrative studies that matter. It must implicitly have an impact on whether you can see yourself as a professor at the department or not, when, you know, there are no women in these positions where you'd like to see yourself one day. (Woman)

It's not very fruitful to be constantly discussing whether this topic can be researched in political science. (Woman)

Women perceived the existence of hierarchies in the different topics. They spoke about real political science that was defined in narrow, traditional terms. Very few felt that they were doing this real political science. They argued that research that was not part of the departmental mainstream was defined as 'playing around' and many did not think that their research was valued. These hierarchies influenced what could legitimately be researched. The ways in which politics was defined impacted upon supervision, graduate seminars and the courses on offer. Non-events as a form of discrimination illustrates this: when the notion of politics is very narrow, certain topics for masters theses are not accepted, there are no discussions about certain PhD theses and it is difficult for students to get supervision on these topics. One woman said, 'If there was a broader range of courses offered by the department, the stereotypical image of the university teacher might change.' This indicated that notions of politics were intertwined with symbolic images of the political scientist.

The men did not have the same problems. None of them referred for instance to their (young) age as a possible factor that might challenge their expertise. It is noteworthy that three of the men interviewed conducted research on topics that might be labelled new politics or thought to be marginal to the research interests of the department. Sometimes they had had to justify their choice of the topic, but none of them had ever felt that this would lead to the lack of respect or a challenge to their expertise in political science:

I have always had a strong identity as a researcher. (Man)

I've never heard a comment like what are you saying here ... It's [the topic] pretty well accepted by now. (Man)

My topic suits this department very well. (Man)

I've never encountered any obstacles, barriers or problems with my topic or my perspective. And I've never seen a professor support only one way of doing political science. (Man)

The quotations show that these men felt that their research topics were widely accepted even if they did not represent mainstream political science. This added to their feeling of belonging to the scientific community. It also explains the positive experiences that the men had about graduate seminars and the department in general: in their view, the discussions in seminars were always constructive, because they were the ones to receive constructive and positive comments and their position as researchers was not challenged. The men who did not represent mainstream political science were not marginalized in the same way as women were. Therefore, the choice of topic cannot on its own explain women's experiences about downgrading their project areas.

Gendered symbols also defined what a political scientist was supposed to look like and be like.

I don't see myself as a political scientist ... (Woman)

You always make sure that you are dressed up properly and in the right way. (Woman)

There was this stigma ... I was clearly looked down upon ... this idea that I wasn't really be able to do these things, and I definitely wasn't suited for any analytical tasks. (Woman)

[My advisor] smiled in a frozen way and said something like, well it is nice that you are playing around with these kinds of things as well. (Woman)

My research is not really appreciated in this department, you know, in the way that it is part of everything done here: it is more like: well, do what you want. But it kind of leaves you outside everything, at the margins. (Woman)

There has been this attitude that 'the girl will do that' ... very downgrading. (Woman)

There's an atmosphere, where you are called a girl. (Woman)

Women did not symbolise being experts or having expertise in political science. The interviews showed that some women paid close attention to the way they dressed to conform to the norm of the political scientist. Yet, the quotations illustrate that women's research was defined as 'playing around', which was harmless but not very important. Because such research was not discussed or debated, the researcher was pushed to the margins to do research on her own. Calling female scholars 'girls' also is one way to devalue them (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995, p. 78) and to lock them out of the symbolic category of political scientists. 'Girls' are not independent adult researchers but they can take care of routine tasks and easy, less challenging jobs. 'Faint appraisal' is one dimension of hidden discrimination (Lorber, 1994). The interviews showed that women's achievements were not always valued: 'nice' was a depressing judgement which closed off further discussion.

Many interviews showed that both supervisors and students had questioned women's expertise, further challenging their position as political scientists:

I don't know whether this is relevant, but I have a feeling that my advisor is completely questioning whether I know this topic or not. (Woman)

It feels like he didn't take me seriously; yes, I do have this feeling sometimes. (Woman)

Credibility ... you know when a young woman comes [to teach] some students can test her: 'Who is this person?' (Woman)

In that seminar I was told, 'What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in the sociology department?' and things like that. (Woman)

In the beginning I had this feeling that the advisor did not appreciate me. This feeling has now changed; somehow the respect has come back. (Woman)

I was giving a lecture and half of the people walked out straight away and when I asked why are you leaving, is it because of this topic [gender], they said, 'yes, that's not very interesting'. (Woman)

Professional diminution and questioning one's expertise are forms of hidden discrimination. The question is one of expertise, in this case competence in political science. The interviews showed that women had to earn both their advisors' and the students' respect and appreciation. The fact that it also was difficult for students to accept women as experts reflects the male-dominance at the department — the students were not used to seeing women in positions of power or expertise. The long masculine history of science has indeed defined knowledge in masculine terms, while femininity has been associated with things that fall outside it, such as emotions and the body (Naskali, 2004, p. 35). As Genevieve Lloyd argues: 'the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind' (1984, p. 2). Questioning women's competence and the value of their research topics is particularly relevant in the academic world that works on the basis of recommendations, reference letters, peer reviews and assessments of manuscripts, research proposals and applications. It is problematic if those high up in the hierarchy value women's and men's expertise in different ways, because this places women and men in different positions at the very start- (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001, p. 163).

The easier relationship of men to science, knowledge and expertise could be seen in the comments that they made to the researcher when answering to the survey. Many men thought that it was their job to give advice to the (female) researcher.

You should approach questions about gender equality a bit more neutrally and also from the men's point of view. (Man)

It seems that you have concentrated on the wrong questions and the things that you have forgotten are in fact more important than gender. (Man)

The survey results showed that very few PhD students had had any courses or training on gender perspective. Nevertheless, some men saw themselves as experts on gender research and gave strong opinions about the ways in which this research was carried out. The same tendency was identified in a study done at the University of Lapland, where the men answering the survey were teaching the researchers how to do their research, warning them about unnecessary action plans and informing the researchers about the 'real causes' behind the problems (Naskali, 2004, pp. 61–2). This indicates that even when

men were not experts on a particular aspect of political science, they symbolized expertise through their masculinity.

'Difficult' women talk about discrimination

Women's and men's different ways of interpreting their positions and chances for a career are part of the way in which a gendered organization works. Hidden discrimination sends a message to women that they cannot be full members of the scientific community and locks them out of it (Husu, 2001, pp. 121–34). This could be seen, for example, in women's interpretations of the reasons for their poor supervision. Some women blamed themselves for the lack of supervision: they did not think that they were good enough researchers, because the supervisors did not seem to be interested in their work. Alternatively, they suggested that they were not active enough in obtaining supervision. Some women put forward their 'wrong' and 'uninteresting' topic as a reason for poor supervision. The same women whose experiences about gender hierarchies I quoted above did not themselves use the language of gender discrimination, as illustrated in the quotations below:

I am definitely one of these people who does not see these problems ... it's like it didn't involve me. (Woman)

Maybe you don't want to see these problems, it would make your life too difficult. You just want to live through it, as long as it doesn't really concern you. It's a lot easier to be angry at the whole university or the whole society than to see these things close by ... then things could get too difficult. (Woman)

I wasn't left with any experiences about discrimination, but it might of course be that if women and men are treated differently, it happens somewhere else than the lecture room or seminar group, more in informal talks. It's all about who the lecturer stays behind to talk to, who is asked to participate in a research project. It takes the form of picking up some students from the mass of students, and I don't know that much about all of this, all my friends are in other departments. (Woman)

Some of these women described a conscious tendency to close their eyes to discrimination. Paying attention to the gender equality problems could make 'life difficult' or the 'situation might turn nasty'. As a result, discrimination was distanced from their own work environment — the problems were seen to lie elsewhere.

This tendency could partly be explained by the difficulty of seeing oneself in the subject position of a victim of discrimination. At the individual level, hidden discrimination can go unnoticed, because bringing it up is emotionally and socially demanding (Husu, 2002a, p. 51).

It is painful to think that ... help! Am I still being discriminated against because of my gender? It is such a horrid thought that you don't want to admit it. (Woman)

Why would you blame your gender for these things, it would be a 'poor woman's defence' ... you know, pitying yourself. (Woman)

There is this stereotype of whinging women ... I've totally closed off the possibility that some unfair treatment could result from that [gender]. (Woman)

It [talking about gender equality] is definitely not taken very seriously here ... It's like, you get immediately a reputation of being difficult. (Woman)

It can be in many ways, that you get this stigma of being big trouble. (Man)

Women, who paid attention to gender equality and its problems at the department, were defined as difficult, whinging or troublesome. Focusing on gender discrimination could have a damaging impact on a woman's position at the department. Women who spoke about discrimination were not taken seriously and were seen as causing trouble and complaining for no good reason. Many stated that they refused to believe that gender discrimination was even possible. One woman called talking about gender discrimination a 'poor woman's defence'. This indicates that reference to gender was internalized as both inappropriate and pitiable. The situation was made worse by the above-mentioned gender blindness and lack of tools for analysing gender. As a result, discrimination remained hidden. However, many women and a few men had paid attention to the fact that the department employed mainly men and they found it unjust:

These percentages are absolutely shocking: where do all the women disappear to? I find it outrageous and aren't only two of the docents [out of 52] women and none of the professors [out of nine]? It is offensive. (Woman)

If you look at the figures, it is true that there have been very few women in the staff ... it has been very male-dominated. (Man)

It annoys you, it makes you angry. (Woman)

I wonder how difficult it will be for me to get a job from here ... I see that road as closed. (Woman)

It does make you feel that there is no future for you here. (Woman)

It's not a particularly good example for the students, and when the media asks for comments, when they need a commentator for some news, well, it is a bit of a shame that the department has only got men to offer as experts. (Woman)

Some of these answers point to ideas about the importance of role models, with women seeing the lack of female role models as discouraging. As a result, they had difficulties in seeing themselves making progress in their careers at the department. When considering their chances, some women referred to a 'closed road' and their lack of a future. They also analysed what the lack of female lecturers and professors could mean to the undergraduate students and the wider public. Again, the idea that the lack of women produced the impression that they could not be experts in political science was raised. Men, in contrast, had paid less attention to the gender hierarchies at the department. When it was pointed out in one interview that all of the professors, senior lecturers and lecturers were men, one man said:

Well, it is pretty shocking when you say that. But I have not paid attention to it. When I go to the department, I see everyone as human beings. I have always seen both women and men there. (Man)

Another man stated:

I have an impression that there are a lot of women in the department I always meet a lot of women there. (Man)

When these men walked in the corridors of the department they either saw genderless human beings or both women and men. They paid little attention to the hierarchies between female secretaries and research assistants, and male professors and lecturers. Female undergraduate students and PhD candidates had also created an impression that there were women in the department. These findings were supported by the survey results. Nearly half of the male respondents either agreed completely or somewhat with the statement, 'Women and men are represented equally among the department's staff'. None of the female respondents agreed with this statement and 60 per cent disagreed with it either completely or somewhat. This shows that gender inequality was a women's problem both in reality (there were no women) and in terms of attitudes (only women saw this as a problem). Men, in contrast, saw both men's and women's positions as equal.

The women interviewed described the department as distant place and stressed that they were outsiders. At the same time as the men talked about their social networks and good friends, the department did not constitute a research community to the women:

No, I don't feel that I belong here. (Woman)

You feel like an outsider here. (Woman)

The atmosphere is very closed. (Woman)

It does bring you down. (Woman)

No one tells you to which events you can and are supposed to participate in. (Woman)

Yes, it's very different here from other places; this is not a normal office environment ... some people don't even say hello to each other and there's no common space, if there was even a coffee room or something ... you don't know what the others are doing ... strange isolation. (Woman)

The quotations illustrate that the department and its male-dominated staff did not form a positive community for many women. These women described the department as a distant place and their own relationship to it as depressed. They did not have clear understanding about their rights and responsibilities. Previous studies have shown that when young women are critical towards the masculine culture they sometimes opt for a strategy of withdrawal. As a result, their marginality appears to be chosen by them although it is caused by the masculine structures they confront (Husu, 2004, p. 9). As these structural factors are difficult to recognise, women seem to settle voluntarily in the position and space that is created for them in the masculine organization and accept it as their own (Naskali, 2004, p. 13). Nonetheless, it is important to understand that this marginality is caused by hidden structures and it is part of the way in which a gendered organization works.

Conclusions

This article has analysed the gendering processes of PhD candidates in a political science department in Finland. The article draws on the idea that a gendered organization and hidden discrimination work together in ways that reproduce gender inequalities in the department Table 1 illustrates the key findings about the ways in which these two work together. Gendered organizations can work on the basis of both overt and hidden discrimination. In the case of the department, the gendered division of labour was based on hidden containment and stalling in recruitment and teaching where jobs were given out in the small all-male inner circles. Gendered interaction was based on non-events in women's supervision and on the insider male networks where tacit knowledge was transmitted. Gendered symbols were based on narrow definitions of political science and perception that the political scientist norm was a man, thus challenging women's competence and expertise. Finally, the gendered interpretations of one's position in the organization were based on women seeing their position as marginal and their chances for a career in the department as non-existent, and men interpreting their position as legitimate political scientists and individual achievers.

What Table 1 makes evident, however, is that gender-based discrimination in the department in relation to the PhD candidates takes mainly hidden

Table 1: Gendered organization and discrimination

Gender-based discrimination	Gendered organization			
	Gendered division of labour	Gendered interaction	Gendered symbols	Gendered interpretations of one's position
Overt	—	—	—	—
Hidden	Containment of women in teaching and recruitment	Non-events in women's supervision, inside men's networks, tacit knowledge	Women's research 'playing around', calling women scholars 'girls', faint appraisal, man as the norm of political scientist, challenging women as experts	Difficult women, women as outsiders, self-confident men, gender equality as a 'women's problem'

forms and works on the lower axis of the table. Overt forms such as gender pay gap, sex-segregated job advertising, verbal abuse or outright violence against women (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995, pp. 48, 54) were not evident in the research material. This creates significant challenges to the organization. Hidden discrimination is more difficult than overt discrimination to grasp and tackle in an organization. Its status as discrimination is more questionable and it can easily be seen as normal or harmless practices or behaviour. As a matter of fact, the department was slow to react to these findings. It took a year after the findings were published in Finnish before any visible steps to change were taken. Then a gender equality working group was established, of which I was a member, and the key aim of the group became to draft a gender equality plan for the department to solve some of the issues. An in-depth analysis of the organizational responses is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that making some of the subtle processes visible did have some impact on the daily workings of the department though the gender equality plan.

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Notes

1. The situation was very similar to that in 1995, when there were 16 posts in the department and all were held by men. The number of women was at its greatest in 1998–2003, when two women, constituting 14 per cent of the staff, held short-term contract posts.
2. The survey was on the Internet and 113 PhD candidates, whose e-mail addresses the department had, were approached with personal e-mails. The response rate among women was 40 per cent and among men, 30 per cent. This low response rate was due to two factors. Most of these doctoral students might have been given a PhD student status 10 to 20 years ago but were now working elsewhere and not actively doing their PhDs. This was the biggest group not to respond to the survey, as they had no contact with the department. The survey results showed that most of the doctoral students who did respond were actively doing

- their PhDs. The second reason was the 'uninteresting' topic — gender equality. Some students thought that it did not concern them. This reflects the persistence of the idea that gender equality has already been achieved in Finland.
3. The initial aim was to interview eight women and eight men, but a number of men refused to be interviewed, citing other duties, so that only five men were interviewed in the end. The interviewees were chosen according to criteria to assure that they were at different stages of their work, had different PhD advisors in the department and had different sources of funding.
 4. Originally Acker (1990, p. 157) had a fifth dimension called a gendered 'organizational logic'. Later, she dropped this fifth dimension and rephrased it as a general notion: gendered 'substructure of organization' (Acker, 1992, p. 259). This illustrates that the fifth dimension was rather a larger theoretical rather than analytical point and the four other dimensions contributed to this gendered organizational logic. The order in which the four dimensions are used in this article is different from Acker's order. The order does not denote a form of hierarchy or of importance either in my work or Acker's and is thus chosen merely to support the logic of the empirical analysis.
 5. Finnish legislation sanctions direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex, but, notably, these do not map directly onto the concepts of overt and subtle discrimination discussed above. Only overt discrimination is incontestably prohibited, although the law tackles some forms of subtle discrimination. In the Act of Equality between Women and Men (Section 7), discrimination means 'treating women and men differently on the basis of sex'. Section 8 details what constitutes discrimination in working life. Among other things, the acts of employer are deemed to constitute discrimination if the employer applies less favourable terms of payment or employment to some employees than others on the basis of sex, or manages the work, distributes tasks, or otherwise arranges working conditions so that an employee is assigned a clearly less favourable status than others on the basis of sex. Employers have a duty to promote equality between women and men in working life 'purposefully and systematically' (Section 6).

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