

Equality in Academia? Gender Barriers and Initiatives in a Public University (2013-2018)

¿Igualdad en la academia? Barreras de género e iniciativas en una universidad pública (2013-2018)

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to identify and analyze gender equality in the academic area of a Chilean public university and assess the institutional initiatives developed and proposed in the last five years that aim to counteract the inequalities identified in the university's daily operations. This review of secondary sources reveals how gender relations reflect the many different power arrangements that reinforce male domination in academia. The initiatives of last five years respond to this reality and demonstrate the constant efforts within the institution—and of female academics themselves—to overcome the various barriers and build a more fair and democratic university.

Keywords: academia, barriers, equality politics, gender, public university

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Resumen

El presente escrito tiene por objetivo clasificar y analizar las evidencias acerca de la situación de género en el estamento académico en una universidad pública de Chile, y reflexionar en torno a las iniciativas institucionales que en los últimos cinco años se han desarrollado y propuesto para contrarrestar las desigualdades identificadas en su quehacer cotidiano. A partir de la revisión de fuentes secundarias, los resultados muestran cómo las relaciones de género articulan múltiples y dispersas constelaciones de poder que refuerzan la dominación masculina en la academia. Al respecto, las iniciativas de los últimos cinco años expresan el esfuerzo continuo de la institución y de las mismas académicas para superar las diferentes barreras y construir una universidad más justa y democrática.

Palabras clave: academia, barreras, género, políticas de equidad, universidad pública

Introduction

In the 20th century, education was a scarce resource to which only the higher strata of society, and particularly men, had access (Ríos, Maldonado, & Varas, 2017; Veneros, 2001). Around the 1950s, women began to enter education on a more regular basis, but it was not until the latter part of the century that access became more equitable. However, in academia there is still not equal participation of women and men, as confirmed by findings from several countries (Buquet, 2016; Burin, 2008; Guil, 2016).

In terms of inclusion and equity, it is not sufficient to look at coverage of the different levels of education by gender, but it is essential to look beyond equalities in access and verify, for example, whether there is (or not) equality in results regarding the participation of women in areas of power and prestige in educational environments (Stromquist, 2006).

In Chile, even though there are similar rates of coverage between men and women in primary and secondary education (Ministerio de Educación de Chile, Mineduc, 2017), the deepening of differences in academic performance can be observed as men and women progress through the school system (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Unesco, 2016). As has been shown in research, in national and international tests the former achieve better performances in mathematics and sciences, while the latter perform better in reading. These gaps have an impact on different educational opportunities and trajectories in higher education (Baeza & Lamadrid, 2018).

At the end of secondary education, higher education is of central importance in the construction of the aspirations of both male and female students (Otero, 2012). In Chile, development and consolidation of a varied range of study programs, as well as favorable cultural dispositions and the promises of social mobility involved (Sepúlveda & Valdebenito, 2014), establish the continuation of studies for the horizon of their expectations. However, tertiary education is not a neutral space, but it also reproduces and recontextualizes historically coded elements of gender (Acker & Dillabough, 2007). The specialized literature agrees that the most illustrative phenomena in this scenario are “horizontal segregation” and “vertical segregation”.

Horizontal segregation is the preeminence of women in certain occupations or areas (Papadópulos & Radakovich, 2006; Parra, 1997; Valdés, 2013), such as pre-school and primary education, social work, nursing, and obstetrics; in contrast to the panorama in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This directly affects labor segmentation: women opt for careers that are associated with lower incomes and, therefore, end up being underrepresented in the highest paid professions in the market (Mizala, 2014).

Meanwhile, vertical segregation refers to the lower presence of women in high-ranking positions of power, prestige, and income, which are key in decision-making (Burin, 2008; Gaete-Quezada, 2015). The underrepresentation of women in governance bodies—where policies are discussed and, specifically, those that could counteract gender inequalities—makes them “a collective with disadvantages compared to their male counterparts” (Buquet, 2016, p. 38).

In line with this, this paper analyzes the situation of women in higher education, specifically in academia in Chile. The sociological relevance of this lies in knowledge worker/s ascribing to a power system based on the prestige of their work and academic productivity, where recognition strengthens it and also influences the increase in funding (for example, for the research itself), generating greater status (Berríos, 2005a).

Academia is, therefore, a field that is based on the symbolic and economic recognition of knowledge production, but it is a space whose dynamics respond more to status logic than economic logic (Berríos, 2005b), which does not imply rejecting imbrication and the virtuous circle between both.

Furthermore, it is “a point at which there is a convergence of production and reproduction of knowledge and a series of interaction and symbolization practices, in which gender plays a central role” (Martínez, 2012, p. 140). From the perspective of gender, academia is a recent field of research abroad and is more nascent in Chile (Ríos et al., 2017).

In light of this, in 2013 Universidad de Chile published a previously unreleased study to analyze and investigate the various gender situations in its different areas. The university has recently implemented various strategies and has also enacted a gender policy to counteract the inequalities identified. The analysis and reflection of these findings are expected to be useful to promote gender equality at other universities.

Background Information

Gender relations in academia: international findings

Gender research is intended to “illuminate certain dimensions of reality that cannot be identified from other interpretative frameworks” (Cobo, 2009, p. 37). Studies in various countries have examined equality in academia, revealing representations and practices that mainly affect women and the equitable development of their careers. This evidence can be found in various different contexts, in terms of labor legislation and also regarding the relationship between the state and universities. Despite variations in the gender focus of policymakers in these countries¹, studies have empirically shown that gender inequalities in academia occur throughout the world (Pastor, Pontón, & Acosta, 2017). The following is a summary of such contributions that are considered to be relevant due to the results they present, in order of their publication dates.

Sandra Acker (1995) studied higher education and the obstacles that affect women in academia, these being the conflicting demands of family and career, the relative defenselessness of minorities, and the dominance exercised by men over knowledge and practice.

Ledwith and Manfredi (2000) observed that academics in the United Kingdom identified gender barriers to the development of their careers, but raising awareness of these problems was not done sufficiently to generate affirmative action initiatives or projects for them in the various disciplines.

Acker and Dillabough (2007) analyzed the experiences of female academics in Canada over three decades. Even though their number increased, even in senior positions, historical continuities were identified, such as job insecurity due to part-time contracts, limited recognition of their work (in terms of prestige and salaries), as well as conflicting commitments when they assumed maternal or caring roles.

Sanders, Willemsen, and Millar (2009), meanwhile, argue that friendship between women is a strategy to address the “glass ceiling” in Dutch academia. Also, Cech and Blair-Loy (2010) claimed that among American women involved in science and technology, structural explanations predominate over those based on individual merit (lack of human capital or individual demotivation) regarding the glass ceiling.

¹ At the institutions there are approaches that are reduced to a limited number of domains or a specific gender program disconnected from the general governance policy, as well as integrated approaches, which seek to extend to most actors in public policy and engage institutions with social change in favor of equality (Daly, 2005).

In Australian academia, interruptions to the academic career that are specific to women undermine their ability to achieve promotions. There are also patterns of activities that obtain unequal recognition: teaching and mentoring of students (carried out preferably by women) versus research, administration, and supervision among peers (carried out primarily by men) (Winchester & Browning, 2015).

Considering the lower access of women to the highest and best-paid positions, De Paola, Ponzio, and Scoppa (2016) analyzed opportunities for promotion in Italian academia. Their results revealed that gender gaps tend to accentuate (by more than 10%) when the number of available positions is reduced, confirming the social norm that suggests that when positions are scarce, it becomes a priority to offer them to men.

In Spain, various authors have agreed that there is a reduction of women in the higher levels of academia and how inequalities are observed, even at the early stages of the career (Guil, 2001; Guil, 2016; Pastor et al., 2017). At the foundation of this situation is the sexual division of work, which affects the use of time and career development.

Indeed, the problem that arises in reconciliation is that “it is they [women] who commonly and mainly assume domestic and care responsibilities for the members of the family” (Montes, 2017, p. 232). This model is even reproduced in couples where both belong to the academic establishment and where greater equity should be expected in the distribution of these activities.

In this respect, it should be underlined that “women do not want to stop progressing in academic careers, but they try to achieve this from very different starting situations and conditions from their male colleagues” (Montes, 2017, p. 235). The strength of male networks in academia should be noted, along with the legitimacy that exists in the face of the fact that men allocate whatever resources are necessary to consolidate themselves in this niche (Montes, 2017; Pastor et al., 2017).

It is also possible to highlight job opportunities without a fixed place from the gender perspective. Writing in Argentina, Mabel Burin (2008) argued that women do not usually acquire these jobs because of the costs to their family and personal life. They are presented with something of a choice between Scylla and Charybdis: the dilemma between developing a career, or dedicating themselves to parenting and the family. The inequality lies in the fact that men “usually conserve their family while advancing their careers” (p. 83) and do not have to face this dilemma. Thus, the author proposes the concept of “glass frontiers”, when not all geographical work locations are available to women:

Although there are no laws that state that ‘women cannot occupy these places of work’, in practice there are family rules and codes that tacitly impose this limitation on the female gender (Burin, 2008, p. 84).

In Mexico, Ana Buquet (2016) studied the symbolic, collective, and subjective aspects in academia that are produced and reproduced in relation to the society in which it is inserted. Considering that, she emphasizes the forms of institutionalization and mainstreaming of the gender approach in higher education institutions.

By way of summary, and in order to understand this complex social phenomenon, Marina Tomàs and Cristina Guillamón (2009) reviewed other typologies and, along with studying quantitative and qualitative information about the reasons for and perceptions of the difficulties faced by women in accessing positions of power, they proposed a distinction between “external barriers” and “internal barriers” in academia. The former are comprised of the social structure (co-optation and the difficulty of reconciling work with personal life) and beliefs about leadership and gender (stereotypes and the gender-influenced culture of universities). Internal barriers, meanwhile, refer to the internalization of feminine attitudes and conducts that restrict equal access and which are related to the socialization processes of women.

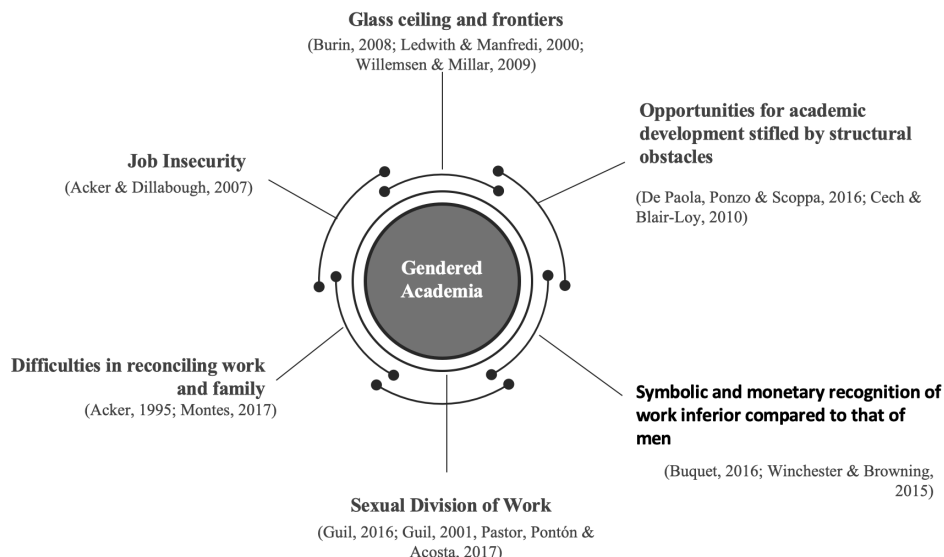


Figure 1. Summary of the main concepts.
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chilean academia in terms of gender

Studies carried out in Chile date back to the early part of this century, and the increasing dissemination of these works indicates that this is a topic that is undergoing consolidation. In addition to the publication of this evidence, various outreach² activities, such as debates and seminars regarding academia and the issues raised by the gender approach, are also being carried out.

One of the most pioneering studies was that conducted by Paulina Berríos (2005a) on the prestige system in Chilean universities. The author underlines the consequences of the incorporation of women in higher education, revealing the low number of research projects led by women (25%)—both in terms of those presented and those awarded funds by the National Fund for Scientific Development and Technological (Fondecyt). By not being able to win research projects, women not only lose income, but also prestige within universities. This is what is known as the Matthew Principle³, which self-reaffirms the androcentric elite culture.

The author subsequently warns about the underrepresentation of women in the most advanced research programs, and university management and governance, even though the number of full-time academics remained stable over the last 10 years (30%). From a quantitative approach and by reviewing reports from national and international agencies in both studies, the author reveals a “loss of women in the system as we move towards higher positions in research trajectories” (Berríos, 2007, p. 45).

In 2011, the Unesco Chair in Gender Studies at the Universidad de Chile published a set of academic papers under the title *Academia y ciencias. Lecturas de género en el siglo XXI* (Montecino & Pemjean, 2011) reflecting on the obstacles and facilitators encountered by women who study science in academia. In those papers, Hernández and Pemjean (2011) emphasize that, up to now, the efforts made have been aimed at improving the structural conditions of women in the androcentric space of university, but it is also necessary to change the perspective towards overcoming the hegemonic ideology that has existed until now; that is, to transform scientific culture and incorporate the epistemological questions of gender theories.

² To name a few of them, the permanent seminar: “Universidades públicas latinoamericanas: construyendo la educación no sexista” (Latin American public universities: building non-sexist education), conducted by Universidad de Chile, which involved the participation of women speakers in 2018. Recently, the debate “Lo femenino en la academia” (The feminine in academia) was held, being organized by the Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social (COES) on March 6, 2019.

³ This involves the expression from the Gospel of Matthew “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath,” (Berríos, 2005a).

Soledad Martínez (2012), meanwhile, addressed the construction of subjectivity among five female academics with doctorates, extensive careers, and high productivity belonging to Chilean universities in the Council of Chancellors (CRUCH). Following a qualitative approach and analyzing their narratives as primary sources, she showed that their current prestige would be the result of their personal efforts and a certain appropriation of hegemonic masculine roles in order to enter this male-dominated space. However, the academics expressed great difficulty in reconciling work and family and high subjective costs associated with career success.

From a quantitative approach, Ricardo Gaete-Quezada (2015) examined the participation of women in senior management positions in higher education institutions. By reviewing the websites of 16 state universities and the Ministry of Education, he analyzed the presence of women in positions of leadership. A woman headed the deanships of 69% of these universities. Some 56% of vice chancellery areas were led by women, while in six universities there were only men. In the universities included in the sample, no woman had headed the chancellery (the highest personal authority) when the study was conducted⁴. The author concludes that women's careers "seem to be stagnated at a medium or low level of hierarchy" (p. 10), well away from making the most important decisions.

Recently, a qualitative-feminist study examined the construction of gender in the organization of academic work in Chile. Based on an intentional sample of female academics with extensive careers and with experience in gender issues at universities in the capital and regions, the author/s coined the term "traffic of academics" to illustrate this female and nomadic workforce in contexts of flexible and insecure employment. Here women are overburdened with administrative and teaching work and are recognized less (Ríos et al., 2017). In agreement with the literature reviewed, these daily practices "create gender brands that re-inscribe and reorganize it in a binary manner" (p. 122), implying disadvantages in the development of academic careers.

In short, international findings such as those in Chile support the idea that there is a shared social problem, although it has specific characteristics depending on each university and national context. Assuming a social justice approach for the construction of more egalitarian societies, the raising of awareness of this continuity necessarily implies questioning the social model and the design of the academic career.

In acknowledgement of these gender inequalities in academia, in August 2012 Universidad de Chile created the Commission for Gender Equality, comprised of academics, students, and officials, to assess the situation and propose a plan for equal gender opportunities. This commission led to the installation of an Office for Equality of Gender Opportunities in 2013, which in 2018 became the Gender Equality Directorate, whose purpose is to strengthen university institutions in this area, promoting anti-discrimination policies that guarantee equal rights and opportunities between men and women.

Underlining the structural dimension of gender and explicitly appearing in the organizational chart and policies of the university, this commission prepared the book *Del biombo a la cátedra: igualdad de oportunidades de género en la Universidad de Chile*, a diagnostic investigation of gender inequities within the educational institution.

Despite the efforts made in this regard at other universities, in a study of 10 universities across the country, Undurraga and Simbürger (2018) showed that, despite the interest of academics and authorities in this subject, in most universities there is no institutional recognition of gender issues. In fact, with the exception of two—Universidad de Chile and Universidad de Valparaíso, both of which are state owned—Chilean universities do not have gender offices or develop institutional policies on this topic. The authors maintain that, in order to advance with structural changes, both in the universities' organizational charts and in labor and personal relations, it is also essential to address the epistemic dimension, that is: the inclusion of gender as a category in the main dimension of the university as a producer of knowledge, in teaching, and in research.

⁴ At present, Universidad de Aysén (which belongs to CRUCH) and Universidad de las Americas (private) have women in their respective chancelleries. At the former university, María Teresa Marshall took office in August 2016, and at the second, Pilar Romaguera took office in February 2018. It should be noted that since the 1980s some private universities in Chile have also had female chancellors.

In this respect, it is important to note the growing concern among students about problems of sexual harassment, which led to widespread mobilizations during 2018 that focused on demands regarding situations such as sexism in educational institutions, which is in turn reflected in the devaluation and invisibilization of women and the knowledge they have produced, including feminist and gender theories.

Methodology

This paper is intended to study the evidence produced by a public university regarding its gender situation and the initiatives to counteract gender gaps. As specific objectives, it establishes: classifying gender barriers that affect equal participation in the academic sector; and reflecting on the adequacy of the institutional initiatives that have been developed/proposed to promote equality. Secondary sources of information were used.

The main source for the study was the book *Del biombo a la cátedra: igualdad de oportunidades de género en la Universidad de Chile*, published in 2013 by the Gender Quality Office belonging to the chancellery of that university. This is the assessment of the situation within its academic, student, and staff areas, or what Berríos (2005b) would call the “private life” of the university. As stated in the first few pages, it is an unprecedented work that seeks to contribute to the debate on the democratic deficit that is seen in the universities in terms of gender and, also, to raise awareness about the cultural and structural discriminations that affect women in the corridors of power (Universidad de Chile, UCH, 2013).

For the purposes of this study, only those results that related to the academic body were selected. This was the quantitative information that illustrates the general scenario and the qualitative information that deepens the perception of the academic staff of the university. This empirical evidence was subsequently classified according to Tomàs and Guillamón’s (2009) model of gender barriers, which differentiates the following types:

Types of barriers	Specifications
External barriers	<p>Social structure Examples: co-optation, the reconciliation of professional, family, and personal life, and the perpetuation of male hegemonic values in spaces of power.</p> <hr/> <p>Beliefs about leadership and gender Examples: belief about the reduced interest of women in exercising power, or that they have fewer leadership qualities, attributing gender to professions or overloading women to demonstrate that they are competent.</p>
Internal barriers	<p>Behaviors and attitudes Examples: over-adaptation of women in places that are alien to them, the fear of not meeting the expectations of their gender role, or the lack of positive female role-models (resulting from the introjection of the gender order based on early socialization).</p>

Figure 2. Classification of the gender barriers in academia.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Tomàs & Guillamón (2009).

These findings were complemented with other studies linking them to broader contexts, such as the national situation. For this reason, information was collected about the initiatives and proposals that Universidad de Chile has developed over the last five years, which are present in the national press and on the website of the institution. This selection responds strictly to criteria of intrinsic relevance (Mejía, 2004) defined by the researchers, such as focusing on advances and challenges for gender equality.

Results

The Universidad de Chile academia

Initial assessment. Based on institutional figures, horizontal segregation occurs among a considerable number of academics in the faculties of Philosophy and Humanities (42%) and Social Sciences (39%), in contrast to the faculties of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (30%), Architecture and Urban Planning (26%), Sciences (26%), Agricultural Sciences (26%), Forestry Sciences (25%), Law (21%), Economics and Business (18%), and Physical and Mathematical Sciences (11%) (UCH, 2013)

There is smaller presence of women in the academic area, where the ratio is one woman for every two men in full-time positions. In addition, 64.2% were contracted and only 34.3% were in permanent positions. In 2013, 40% of the total number of assistants were women, which could be considered the first step of a career that is linked to the undergraduate program. However, definite vertical segmentation was observed. The underrepresentation of women in all academic hierarchies (from associate lecturers to regular associate professor in the regular academic category) becomes more acute the further up the hierarchy (Figure 3) (UCH, 2013).

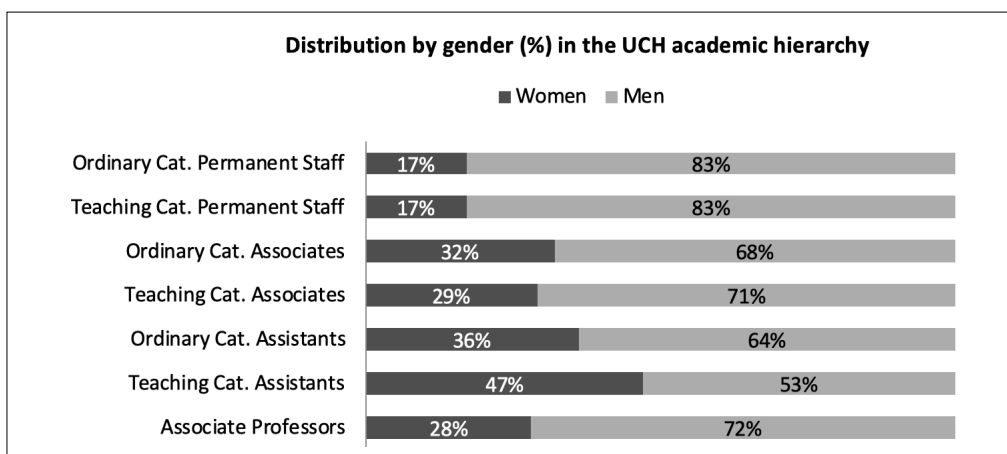


Figure 3. Women in the academic hierarchy of Universidad de Chile.
Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from Universidad de Chile, 2013.

One aspect related to promotion is disciplinary specialization. According to the latest *Encuesta de trayectoria de profesionales con grado de doctor* [Survey of professionals with a doctorate degree] (Ministerio de Economía, 2016) at the national level, the proportion of men with PhDs is still higher, although in three years the gap with women has narrowed. Specifically, in 2011 only 28% of the total were women with doctorates, while in 2014 that figure had increased to 35%. In the section for those under 35 years of age, 45% of women and 55% of men had a doctorate degree. However, after this age, the gender gap becomes more established and widens (Figure 4).

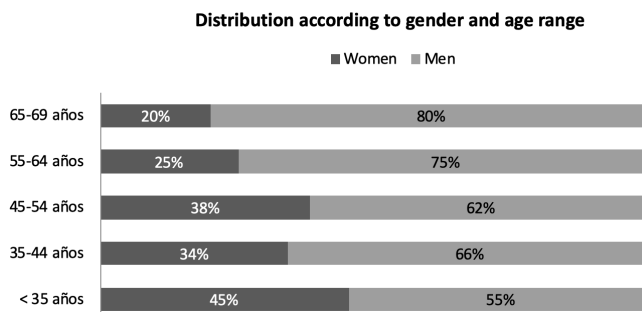


Figure 4. Distribution of individuals with a doctorate according to gender and age range.
Source: Ministerio de Economía, Chile, 2016.

In Chile, it is a requirement to have an academic doctorate degree to apply for competitive external funding, such as the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (Fondecyt), a competition for Initiation in Research or Regular Research projects that is conducted on an annual basis by the National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research (Conicyt). The university records indicate an increase in applications for research projects with a woman responsible for them, as well in the award of these projects. Thus, in 2006 the percentages of approval in the Initiation and Regular contest were 15.38% and 26.51%, respectively, which increased to 68.18% and 56.16% in 2012. This shows that the gap compared to the approval rate for projects led by men decreased (62.50% and 59.89%)⁵ (UCH, 2013).

This situation is similar to that seen nationally. Between 2013 and 2015 in the Initiation competition, 35% of the total number of projects presented and 33% of those approved were headed by women. In the Regular competition, those rates were lower: 27% of the total number of projects presented and 24% of the total approved were led by women (Conicyt, 2016a). With this information, it can be stated that there is a smaller number of female researchers with external financing.

External barriers.

Social structure. The co-optation and permanence of academic staff is key in the social structure. The institutional assessment shows greater loss of women the further one goes up the hierarchy.

Based on the discourses of the same female academics, we can observe how the “Scylla and Charybdis dilemma” proposed by Burin (2008) is articulated. The dilemma between progressing a career versus the family affects female academics, who in many cases delay (previous generations) or advance (new generations) their doctoral specialization, which does not happen with male academics. It is no coincidence that between 2011-2014 the largest increase in women with a doctorate was observed in the younger age group (under 35 years), which could indicate a strategy to avoid compromising their academic careers so strongly with motherhood.

As regards development in academia, the assessment carried out by the university is that women have fewer opportunities for “initiation, consolidation, and promotion in the academic career” (UCH, 2013, p. 77), therefore, this is an increase in conditions of inequality, because in this niche men are eventually promoted to a greater degree than women.

As research on this topic shows, the high demands of the academic career result in longer working days, involving even leisure or rest periods in order to accumulate merits in the shortest possible time. We must also add unequal uses of time to this, where women spend twice as much time on domestic activities and caregiving as men (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE, 2016). The “long-distance race” and the sexual division of work mean that for a woman to equate their curriculum with that of a man requires twice as much time (Montes, 2017).

The diagnosis done by Universidad de Chile warns how the reduction of working hours due to maternity negatively affects the real possibilities of continuing and/or ascending in the academic hierarchy for the group of women, damaging their competitiveness and productivity compared to their male colleagues. In line with other research, maternity acts as a restraint on an academic career, making consolidation difficult due to the woman being unable to assume greater academic responsibilities in research, teaching, or administration (Burin, 2008; Martínez, 2012).

It should be noted that maternity is not an obstacle for academics per se, but rather the lack of reconciliation that is associated with gender, when “demand in one sphere affects or limits participation in the other” (Martínez, 2012, p. 137). As the author stresses, “the academic option comes into constant tension with the family” (p. 156), since both require significant dedication of time, especially when academic work is practically a way of life, as previously stated.

⁵ This is explained mainly by the Gender management program (PMG)

This tension between time used for remunerated and non-remunerated work has a negative influence on academic productivity, which is a factor to evaluate merit for the university. In this case, it is noteworthy that both men and women perceive the differences in salaries associated with merit within the academic area, without explicitly recognizing the gender barriers that sustain them. In other words, remuneration based on merit disregards the gender barriers to achieve it.

Beliefs about leadership and gender. As regards external barriers related to beliefs about leadership in academia, the naturalization of capacities and activities between men and women emerges. Specifically, their discourses underpin the idea that the former are competitive and therefore seek greater status and better remuneration, while the latter prefer job stability. Men would have a natural inclination toward authority and exercising power, which explains why “the rate of [female] participation in decision-making bodies is lower than the proportion of women in the academic establishment” (UCH, 2013, p. 37).

At the same time the Homo sapiens/faber distinction operates in this sphere. The female academics pointed out that their peers recognized them more as managers/administrators within the institution than as researchers who generated knowledge. There is a rooted belief that women are more apt for certain subjects, such as education, social sciences, or humanities instead of STEM disciplines, which leads to the reproduction of the distinction of feminine knowledge versus masculine knowledge (Winchester & Browning, 2015). As Bourdieu (2000) would say, a series of pairs of emergent hierarchical opposites are observed, which are at the basis of certain principles of viewing and dividing gender that structure the perception and the specific and symbolic organization of social life, such as the university.

Internal barriers.

Behaviors and attitudes. The circumstances analyzed are correlated in certain traces of self-exclusion, when women develop specific patterns of work and social relationships linked to the demand for academic productivity, and when they do not develop ambitions to access spaces of power.

When the “Scylla and Charybdis dilemma” comes into effect, some women choose posts and functions with lesser time demands or with a fixed schedule (teaching, administration) so as to better reconcile them with family life, or they are instead overloaded in terms of productivity demands and dedication to work in order to achieve the aforementioned merits in the shortest possible time, disregarding personal and family life outside academia (Berríos, 2007). Other studies emphasize the decrease in the number of children born compared to those that females academics would have liked to have, or directly consider that academia as incompatible with bringing up a family (Montes, 2017).

Some women explain that they feel uncomfortable with power, unlike men who are used to exercising it. Those who do manage to reach executive positions may do so mainly to develop institutional projects for the benefit of their units, while the reason why men do so may be to seek greater personal recognition in economic and symbolic terms (UCH, 2013). This coincides with the results of Tomàs and Guillamón, when the socially accepted image of women is “the willingness to serve, the orientation toward cooperative behaviors in the face of competitive behavior, or the absence of a marked ambition for power” (p. 268). In this regard, the shortage of positive female models of reference may affect the (re) production—instead of the deconstruction—of this masculine domain.

Initiatives after 2013: a look at the last five years. Considering all the costs (objective and subjective) that affect women during their education in advanced human capital, Universidad de Chile (2013) pointed out the need for a broader discussion of issues of equality between men and women. Some of the challenges posed were the standardization of internal measures to protect maternity and promotion of the academic careers of women.

In accordance with that, in early 2018 the university enacted the *Política de corresponsabilidad social en la conciliación de responsabilidades familiares y las actividades universitarias* (Policy of social responsibility in the reconciliation of family responsibilities and university activities), with the objective of “guaranteeing equal opportunities in the equal participation of men and women in the different areas of university activities” (UCH, 2018, p. 17).

In particular, Line of Action N° 3 establishes “guaranteeing gender equality in the evaluation and academic qualification processes” (p. 19). The criteria emerging from this line are the adaptation of the demands of academic activities and functions for reasons of maternity and the consideration of the effects of this on productivity and remaining in hierarchies. This is related to Conicyt’s 2007 equity initiative, which grants two years for each maternity leave regarding evaluation of the merits of the academics presenting projects.

Other lines of action refer to favoring the reconciliation of family and academic responsibilities for students (N° 2) and to providing care and initial education services to the children of students, academics, and support staff (N° 1). As a result of this, the university has the *Reglamento de corresponsabilidad social para el cuidado de hijas e hijos de estudiantes* (Social co-responsibility regulation for the care of the children of students), which establishes pre- and post-natal benefits for women and men enrolled at the university, as well as the construction of nurseries on the Norte, Sur, Juan Gómez Millas and Beauchef campuses (the latter has been in operation since March 2018) (Palma, 2018).

Implementation of this gender-focused policy should be applied transversally for all functions of the university: teaching (pre- and postgraduate), research, outreach, creation and, of course, in management/administration. In other words, this implies that “gender issues” are not limited to the activities of an area, but they become a “navigational chart” and actively involve all the disciplines, departments/units, and agents of the university. Gender mainstreaming in academia involves the transition from regulation to the creation of knowledge, teaching-learning processes, and management mechanisms and instruments (Buquet, 2016).

The gender order that is produced and reproduced in the university dovetails with other processes and wider social and cultural structures (Buquet, 2016). Considering the permanent dialogue of Universidad de Chile with the society in which it is inserted, we should mention the feminist movements of April and May 2018 that questioned the public and personal dimensions of education. The size of these movements, their strength, and the support they received from different sectors allow us to consider them as the “third wave” in Chile. In a recent interview, Silvia Lamadrid stated out that it is “the most important historic feminist movement after the suffrage demands of the last century” (Escobar, 2018).

Many of the female academics at Universidad de Chile supported the students’ demands. In June 2018 these academics formed the Amanda Labarca Network and, with more than 250 signatories, delivered the *Manifiesto y propuestas de igualdad de género* (Manifiesto and gender equality proposals) to the Chancellor. The document recommends overcoming the fragmentation of areas of knowledge and the need to move together towards the search for gender equality (in access, participation, and permanence), as well as the establishment of new treatment at the university, the modification of the institutional structures, and the implementation of non-sexist education that is free from any form of violence.

In this context, the female academics proposed the creation of a Vice Chancellery for Equality and Equity, as well as other initiatives that involve systems of management, the academic agenda, and regulatory frameworks, such as awareness campaigns and various strategies to ensure spaces for equal participation in decision-making. Until now, this initiative has been under discussion, because institutionalization and mainstreaming constitute “a process of change in policies and routines, with technical and political implications” (United Nations Development Program, UNDP, 2010, p. 165).

The International literature demonstrates the key role of the vice chancelleries and institutional cooperation. In Australia, for example, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in collaboration with inter-university bodies managed to develop gender indicators in corporate plans; ensure transparency in recruitment and promotion processes; implement programs for the development of a good career; and generate support networks for women (Winchester & Browning, 2015).

Final Approaches

The findings analyzed regarding the situation of knowledge workers confirm how the gender system operates as a “multiple power, located in very different spaces” (De Barbieri, 1993, p. 146), with the academia of Universidad de Chile not being an exception. The internalization of the gender order is

expressed in various internal and external gender barriers within this public and secular university, which is the oldest in the country (Figure 5).

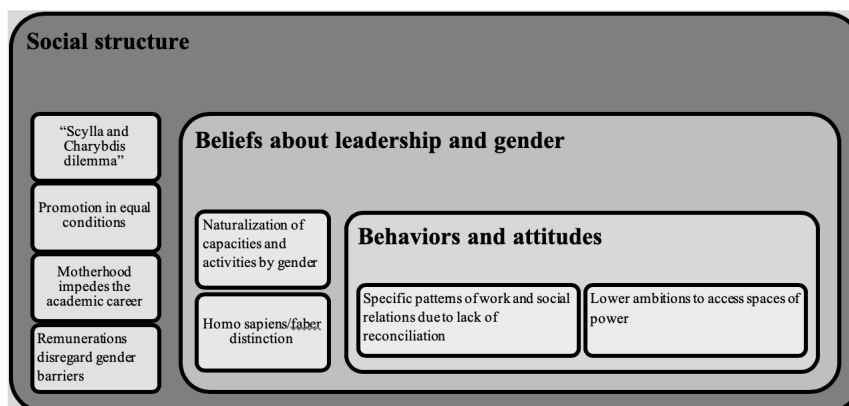


Figure 5. Summary of results.
Source: Prepared by the authors.

There is a double imbalance in distribution by gender. Women are concentrated in certain areas of knowledge (horizontal segregation) and they are also underrepresented in higher levels of the hierarchies, decision-making positions, and collegiate bodies (vertical segregation) (Buquet, 2016). These phenomena are understood through the “sticky floor” or “glass ceiling” described by Burin (2008), which, together with other dynamics, produce and reproduce the gender order in HEIs.

Academic careers are intersected by a series of inequalities that worsen as one advances through the life cycle. It is the period of consolidation and greater academic productivity that is placed under strain by the option of motherhood and raising children. In addition to this is the use of time and energy that falls mainly upon women when caring for dependent people.

Promotion in academia is subject to gender, as women are faced with the dilemma of advancing their careers or favoring the family, even more so when their partners do not have their own project abroad (as is the case with the initiation of doctorate programs). As regards specialization in subjects, men often have partners who accompany them without being faced with this critical choice (Burin, 2008; Montes, 2017). Therefore, the “Scylla and Charybdis dilemma” operates as a strictly female situation, which is why it is necessary to generate broader measures to change these long-term sociocultural patterns.

Similarly, women are affected by “greater inequalities at the time of their selection to enter the university, due to the delays in building a successful career” (Universidad de Chile, 2013, pp. 89-90), which implies, for example, that they obtained a lesser amount of Fondecyt research projects in recent times. According to Berríos (2007), more efforts are needed to consolidate their participation within these institutions. Therefore, it is essential to promote specialization and recruit more women with doctorates, as it not only allows them to develop research more broadly, but also constitutes an opportunity to obtain better working conditions and also to gain promotion to decision-making positions.

These gender inequalities in academia are the simultaneous expression of a problem of social class and status, so therefore they must be resolved in the areas of both distribution and recognition (Fraser, 2008). We must not forget that it is in “the most valued social and material cusp of the system where the most significant difference between men and women lies” (Berríos, 2007, p. 49).

According to the findings analyzed in this paper and as indicated by the *Estudio sobre la realidad nacional en formación y promoción de mujeres científicas en STEM* (Study on the national situation in education and promotion of women scientists in STEM), the main difficulty faced by women who choose a career as a researcher is the reconciliation of this activity with family life (Conicyt, 2016b). The accumulation of merits at a disadvantage for women means it is essential to raise awareness about these barriers for the construction of academic careers based on a social justice perspective and not solely from the male viewpoint.

The strategies and proposals developed for gender equality are clearly aligned with the assessment made by Universidad de Chile (2013), which represents the continuous efforts made by its authorities. In the same vein, this intention was established in 2015 with the signing of the collaboration agreement with the National Board of Kindergartens (Junji) for the creation of nurseries, and in 2018 with the aforementioned co-responsibility policy. In addition, the Gender Office was absorbed by the Gender Equality Directorate, a central structure of the university that year. This gender policy and other related documents, such as the *Política para prevenir el acoso sexual* (Policy to prevent sexual harassment) are disseminated and promoted among the members of the university community, with the aim of generating a real impact in the private life of the university.

On the other hand, the creation of a proposal by female academics is of fundamental importance, just as the creation of a Vice Chancellery of Gender has been. Various studies confirm the forms of reproduction of inequalities, but it is also interesting to observe the resistance of female academics, the visibility of their work, and the demands for equality in the practices of the universities (Acker & Dillabough, 2007).

It is therefore necessary to generate and promote more research into this subject, including assessments to illustrate the current scenario in academia, as well as the study of the representation and labor of women in this particular area of work. It is expected that a study can be produced similar to that in 2013 which systematizes the advances of recent years and stipulates the challenges for the future.

Although women's experiences differ from the liberal discourse of equal opportunities which universities espouse (Berríos, 2005b), the importance of the initiatives carried out by higher education institutions and their agents to build a society that is more democratic and inclusive in terms of gender are undeniably laudable.

In this sense, it is important to underline that, together with the institutional changes promoted by the academic sector, student demands have emerged against sexism in universities. In fact, since 2013 there have been public complaints about sexual harassment by teachers and, in particular, regarding the sluggishness and inability of university institutions to punish and prevent such abuses. This led to the massive national demonstrations seen in 2018, a period known as "Feminist May", and the deployment of new forms of organization that went beyond the traditional student federations and revealed the urgent need to renew the institutions themselves, both in their organization and content.

Finally, an effective university gender equality policy means a renewal that should not be limited to the number of women at the institution, but instead implies working to eliminate violence in gender relations and also on the symbolic dimension that sustains them, revealing the multiple exclusions that the institution has naturalized until now.

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