

Gender in Academic Networking: The Role of Gatekeepers in Professorial Recruitment

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study is to build a theoretical framework to understand how gendered networking practices produce or counter inequalities in organizations. We introduce a practice approach combined with a feminist perspective in organization network studies. The notions of gender and networking as social practices allow better insights into what people say and do in networks, and the ways that networking produces or counters gender inequalities. We draw on empirical material about professorial appointments in Dutch academia and analyse the accounts of gatekeepers illuminating their networking practices. The accounts show which networking practices gatekeepers routinely use in recruitment and how these networking practices are intertwined with gender practices. We use the notion of mobilizing masculinities to understand the self-evident identification of men gatekeepers with men in their networks, and to understand how both men and women gatekeepers prefer the male candidates that resemble the proven masculine success model. Furthermore, this study provides the first empirical insights in mobilizing femininities in which women search for and support women candidates. We show how the gender practice of mobilizing femininities is a more precarious and marked practice than mobilizing masculinities. Mobilizing femininities in networking is intended to counter gender inequalities, but is only partially successful. Through constructions of 'who you can trust' or 'who is a risk', gatekeepers exercise the power of inclusion and exclusion and contribute to the persistence of structural gender inequalities.

Keywords: academic recruitment, gatekeepers, gender practices, mobilizing femininities, mobilizing masculinities, networking

INTRODUCTION

Networks are a burgeoning terrain of research in management and organization studies (Borgatti and Foster, 2003; Ibarra et al., 2005; Jack, 2005; Kilduff and Brass, 2010; Parkhe et al., 2006). Organizational scholars have shown that involvement in networks is important for a successful career since interpersonal networks can provide job opportunities (Burt, 1992, 2005; Granovetter, 1974; Lin and Dumin, 1986), support (Bagilhole

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and Goode, 2001; Gersick et al., 2000; James, 2000), influence and status attainment (Lai et al., 1998; Mehra et al., 2006), and a higher salary (Seidel et al., 2000). Most research concentrates on the beneficial effects of networks, such as social support, resources, information, and improved performance (Flap and Völker, 2004). Yet, networks also produce inequalities as there is ample evidence of network related unequal outcomes in status, influence, careers, information, and trust (Ibarra, 1992; Krackhardt, 1990; Podolny and Baron, 1997). Network studies have paid some attention to inequalities in the networks of people with different social identities, such as age, race, ethnicity, social class, and gender (Ibarra et al., 2005; G. McGuire, 2012; M. McGuire, 2002; Reagans, 2011). The focus of this paper is on gender in networks, as gender is a fundamental organizing principle (Scott, 1986) that cuts through other social identities.

Previous network research has shown differences between women and men in structures and success of networks (Brass, 1985; Burt, 1998; Durbin, 2011; Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Ibarra, 1997). Men have more access to higher status sponsors, strategic network partners, and powerful coalitions (Burt, 1998; Ibarra, 1993). Women experience barriers to networking because of time constraints and family responsibilities (Forret and Dougherty, 2001; Linehan, 2001) and their reluctance to engage in network activities (Tonge, 2008). Women use their networks for social support whereas men successfully use networks for self-promotion and increasing their internal visibility (Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Ibarra, 1992).

Despite their contribution to the identification of sex differences in networks, these studies present two major limitations. First, they consider gender as a variable, maintaining the categories of women and men as robust categories to measure and explain various inequalities in networks (Alvesson and Billing, 2009). This emphasis on sex differences constrains our ability to consider how organizations as socio-cultural contexts shape these differences (Ely and Padavic, 2007). This is problematic as it fails to address gendered norms in organizations, overlooks structural power inequalities, and neglects the complex interplay between organizational features and individual-level processes (Acker, 1990).

Second, in line with the majority of social network research in organizations, studies on sex differences in networks concentrate on network structures and outcomes. Several prominent network scholars have noted that the networking activities that produce these structures and outcomes receive much less attention (Brass et al., 2004; Ibarra et al., 2005; Kilduff and Tsai, 2003; Porter and Powell, 2006). The emphasis on social structures gives centre stage to the formal properties of abstract relations between actors, but provides little insight in how those structures come about. Agentic perspectives on networks are relatively rare and there is still much more to learn about network behaviour or networking (Ibarra et al., 2005). Kilduff and Brass (2010) note how the most frequent criticism of social network research is that it fails to take human agency into account. Thus, there is a need to develop better insights into the crucial role of actors and into how these actors behave in networks.

To address these limitations, we turn to a practice approach that focuses on what people are actually saying and doing in daily interactions (Yanow, 2006). The 'practice turn' in the social sciences (*Organization Studies*, 2009; Schatzki et al., 2001) addresses the classic social theory question of the relation between social structures and agency in a

novel way through the study of the actual work practices of people in organizations (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Yanow, 2006). The adoption of practice approaches has enabled organization scholars to more closely describe and understand organizational phenomena as they unfold (Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2009). The interest in practices has not yet been taken up in organizational network research, but the conceptualization of gender as a social practice has already gained some prominence in feminist organization studies (Martin, 2003; Poggio, 2006).

The aim of this study is to develop a theoretical framework that combines a practice approach and feminist constructionism to understand how networking practices perpetuate or counter gender inequalities. This framework allows us to make two important contributions to network studies. First, the notion of networking practices gives center stage to agentic women and men who engage in micro-level activities that are consequential in producing the structural contours of organizational life (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Their accounts of networking provide us with a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of how networking practices routinely produce organizational outcomes. Second, calling attention to gender in networking introduces a more sophisticated notion of gender in organization network studies that conceptualizes gender as a social practice, not as a variable. The notions of gender and networking as social practices bring a new perspective in organization network research that allows better insights into the networking activities of people (Benschop, 2009; Shaw, 2006), in how their networking is gendered and how their gendered networking creates, reinforces, or counters structural gender inequalities.

The context in which we study gender in networking is academic recruitment, more specifically the recruitment of full professors. In earlier papers we have shown that informal and formal networks of elite academics are essential in building a reputation of excellence for professorial candidates (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012b). This study builds on that by focusing on the networking practices of those elite academics whom we consider to be gatekeepers. The networking practices of gatekeepers play a crucial role in granting access to the influential and desirable positions of full professors. We use information from a qualitative study among gatekeepers, who are members of selection committees of seven Dutch universities. The data contain detailed accounts of how networking is a routine part of the recruitment of full professors. As privacy and confidentiality issues prevented us from observing the networking practices as they unfold, our analysis focuses on the accounts of networking practices. The accounts of networking practices help us to identify how elites grant access to top positions through informal relations and interactions and also how these gatekeepers legitimize their practices of granting access to some and not to others. We analyse those accounts along three research questions: (1) Which networking practices do gatekeepers use in professorial recruitment? (2) How do gatekeepers practice gender in networking? (3) How do these networking practices produce or counteract gender inequalities?

The paper is organized in five sections. We start with an elaboration of our theoretical perspective on gender in networking practices. We then describe our qualitative methodology, including the data collection and the analysis. In the third section, we present the empirical material that shows how gatekeeping is used in professorial recruitment and how gender is practiced in gatekeeping. We end the paper with a discussion and

conclusion that reflect on the contributions of this study to network studies and feminist organization studies.

NETWORKING, GATEKEEPING, AND GENDER PRACTICES

Networking

Currently, network structures, outcomes, and the measurement of structures and outcomes preoccupy organizational network research (Kilduff and Brass, 2010). This field has often been criticized for its neglect of the role of human agency in the production of those structures and outcomes (Brass et al., 2004; Ibarra et al., 2005; Kilduff and Tsai, 2003; Porter and Powell, 2006). Some suggestions have been made that are useful to explore the socially accomplished and dynamic character of networking. These studies focus on networking as a verb, not as a noun (Weick, 1979). Forret and Dougherty (2004), for example, have asserted that building, maintaining, and using relationships with others who have the potential to assist people in their work or career constitute the core of networking dynamics. Networking has been analysed as an important career management strategy and successful networking has been linked to career outcomes such as increased job opportunities, promotions, visibility, and social support (Forret and Dougherty, 2004; McGuire, 2002; Singh et al., 2006; Tonge, 2008). Although these studies look at networking, none of them seem to theorize this concept of networking adequately.

Connecting to the literature on networking and to provide an alternative to the 'structuralist legacy of network analysis' (Kilduff and Tsai, 2003, p. 113), we propose a practice-based approach that emphasizes the process-relational core of networking. The practice-based approach has proven to be an excellent entrant in the interrelation of agency and structure in fields such as strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006), learning (Nicolini et al., 2003), knowledge (Gherardi, 2000; Orlikowski, 2002), and gender (Martin, 2003, 2006; Mathieu, 2009; Poggio, 2006). The interest in practices, in what people actually say and do in daily interactions (Yanow, 2006), has not yet been taken up in organizational network research. A practice-based approach of networking provides a framework for developing a more accurate description and richer theoretical understanding of networking.

We draw on the concept of networking practices to study the activities that actors employ when networking, which actors are involved in networking, what resources are distributed through networking, and what the implications of networking are. Networking practices are defined here as the dynamic, socio-political actions of building, maintaining, and using relations at work for personal, career, and organizational benefits. Some examples of networking practices include maintaining contacts, socializing, forming coalitions, negotiating, and sharing or withholding information. In this study on professorial recruitment, we are especially interested in the networking practices of elites that provide career support and assistance for professorial candidates.

Gatekeepers

A crucial networking practice in professorial recruitment is gatekeeping. Merton (1973) describes gatekeeping as the 'fourth major role' of academics, alongside those of

researcher, teacher, and administrator. In the allocation of personnel, gatekeepers 'evaluate the promise and limitations of aspirants to new positions, thus affecting both the mobility of individual scientists and, in the aggregate, the distribution of personnel throughout the system' (p. 522). Academics in key positions of influence engage in gatekeeping when they are actively involved in the recruitment of candidates. Gatekeeping encompasses scouting for eligible applicants through formal or informal networking and keeping a constant watch on the academic field. As a result, the initial selection of candidates takes place at an early stage, often long before a position is formally announced. In this way, gatekeepers determine the composition of the list of candidates. Gatekeeping concerns multiple phases in the appointment process as it pertains to the decisions about which candidates are shortlisted, interviewed, and nominated. Thus gatekeeping implies the power of elites to grant privileges and allow access to some and deny it to others (Husu, 2004; Weber, 1980 [1921]; Wright Mills, 1956 [2000]).

It is our argument that gender is implicated in gatekeeping. When the gatekeepers are predominantly men, women have difficulty gaining access to desirable academic networks (Gersick et al., 2000; Husu, 2004). The mechanism of homophily is often used to explain this result. Homophily (i.e. love of the same) is the principle that communication and relationship formation between similar people occurs at a higher rate and is easier than contact among dissimilar people (McPherson et al., 2001). A related phenomenon is homosociality (Kanter, 1977) – seeking, enjoying, and/or favouring the company of one's own gender – and the 'similar-to-me-effect' (Byrne, 1971; Rand and Wexley, 1975). The impact of homophily has been documented in a number of network studies. McPherson et al. (2001) cite over 100 studies that have observed homophily in relation to age, gender, class and organizational group roles. They distinguish between chance homophily and choice homophily. The former refers to homophily that can be expected to occur by chance while the latter is the amount of homophily over and above this expected value. Choice homophily represents a bias that leads similar people to associate more often than average, given their relative numbers in the opportunity structure. Both chance and choice homophily can negatively affect women's opportunities in male-dominated organizations because they result in their exclusion. Hitherto, the studies on homophily have looked at sex differences in networks and have neglected gender. This means that they focus on the different positions of women and men, without taking into account the meanings of femininity and masculinity in organizations. Homophily studies use sex differences as explanation and oversimplify the gendered processes of inclusion and exclusion in networks. In this paper, we go beyond the sex differences that feature in network studies, and problematize essentialist conceptions of men and women. We do not conceptualize gender as a dichotomy, or a personal characteristic (Ely and Padavic, 2007), but use feminist constructionism (Lorber, 2005) to understand gender as a complex social practice that can address organizational routines and norms that produce or counteract power inequalities (Acker, 1990). This notion can bring important insights in the more complex dynamics of gender in networking practices of gatekeepers. To understand those dynamics, we need a more sophisticated theory of gender, which is presented in the next section.

Gender Practices

We conceptualize gender as a social practice to refer to the multilayered everyday social practices of distinguishing between men and women, masculinity and femininity. This definition is informed by the practice-based approach that has been influential in recent studies of gender in organizations (Bruni et al., 2004; Mathieu, 2009; Poggio, 2006; Pullen and Simpson, 2009). The conceptualization of gender as a social practice builds on earlier notions of doing (West and Zimmerman, 1987), saying (Gherardi, 1994; Martin, 2003), and performing of gender (Butler, 1990). These concepts frame gender as something that people do and say in interaction, when they distinguish between women and men, masculinity and femininity. Gender practices are created and negotiated in interaction, dependent on discursive, institutional, and social contexts. Many gender practices are characterized by routines and, as such, are unintentional or unconscious (Martin, 2006) and almost invisible even to their practitioners (Fletcher, 1999; Gherardi, 1994; Martin, 2001). Gender can be considered an elementary social practice that anchors other practices (Swidler, 2001), such as networking practices. With the notions of gender and networking as social practices, we bring a new perspective in organization network research that allows better insights into what people say and do in networks, in their networking activities (Shaw, 2006), and in the way that networking creates, reinforces, or counters gender inequalities.

Theorizing Gender Practices in Networking

Most research on gender in academia overlooks men's part in reproducing gendered networks (Hearn, 2004). While the exclusionary effects of the networking practices of gatekeepers are documented (Husu, 2004), what gatekeepers do and say to grant access to top positions through informal relations and interactions is hitherto under theorized. To fill this gap and to understand how gender is practised by gatekeepers who are mostly men, we turn to the work of Martin (2001) who has developed the concept of mobilizing masculinities to theorize the interactions among men at work. This concept of mobilizing masculinities allows us to introduce a focus on men's interactions in networking.

'Masculinities' refers to the practices that are represented or interpreted by either actor and/or observer as masculine within a system of gender relations that give them meaning as gendered 'masculine' (Martin, 2001, p. 588). Martin distinguishes between individual men's 'doing of masculinity' versus a group of men collectively 'mobilizing masculinities'. Mobilizing masculinities refers to the 'practices wherein two or more men concertedly bring to bear, or bring into play, masculinity/ies' (Martin, 2001, p. 588). When an individual man does masculinity, women are not too bothered by it. But when men act in concert to do masculinities together, then Martin labels this dynamic as mobilizing masculinities. It is this collective practice that women experience as harmful due to its exclusionary or devaluing effects. Martin (2003) uses the concept of liminal awareness to explain how men mobilize masculinities without being fully conscious of doing so. She differentiates between two types of masculinities: contesting and affiliating masculinities. The first relates to men acting in concert to distance or separate themselves from others by showing their superior rank or status, obtaining control over and

competing with others, or deriving benefit from the work done by others. The second relates to men's actions of aligning with other men in ways that benefit self, others, or both. This second type, affiliating masculinities, can be used to shed light on the networking practices of the gatekeepers under study. We will draw on this notion to analyse the way in which male gatekeepers form, use, and maintain network connections with other men when recruiting professorial candidates. This will enable us to study how gender inequality comes about in networking by inclusion rather than exclusion.

In order to overcome simplified dichotomies in which support is solely given along gender lines, we also question whether women can mobilize masculinities. Knights and Kerfoot (2004) found that 'career women' show that masculinity is not the exclusive preserve of men. '[Women] apparently see no alternative other than to emulate men in order not to be compared negatively with them or to suffer from the stereotypes that masculine hegemonic organizations reproduce' (p. 447). We therefore explore the role of the few female gatekeepers in mobilizing masculinities.

All in all, we observe that the network literature does not look at practices, and the gender in networks literature is preoccupied with differences between men and women. By conceptualizing gender and networking as social practices, we fill the gap in the literature on the gendered networking practices of men and women. The theoretical framework so far provides us with the conceptual tools to explore how men gatekeepers mobilize masculinities, and the role of women gatekeepers therein. These insights will enable us to explain how networking practices of inclusion and exclusion bring about gender inequality.

METHODOLOGY

Case Study: Dutch Academia

This study employs empirical material that was obtained in research on professorial recruitment and selection in the Netherlands (Van den Brink, 2010). Hitherto, there is hardly any research conducted on professorial recruitment, because these processes contain sensitive information concerning the privacy of candidates and committee deliberations, and reports are often confidential. The access to information about professorial recruitment and selection is restricted to those who are directly involved, and universities are not keen to reveal their practices in such a sensitive area. The empirical material is part of an extensive PhD study that has yielded several publications, which all have a different focus and contribution. This paper concentrates on building a framework on gender in networking, whereas in other papers, we focused on the construction of excellence (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012b), the impossibilities of organizational change (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012a), and the transparencies of recruitment policies (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

The underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions is a widespread international phenomenon despite divergent histories of science and regardless of equality policies (EU, 2012). The EU average percentage of female full professors is 20 per cent (EU, 2012), and even countries with the highest proportion – e.g. Finland (24 per cent) and Romania (36 per cent) – are far away from gender equality in higher

education. The Dutch statistics on female full professors (12 per cent) are remarkably low compared to the rest of Europe, suggesting some idiosyncrasy in the Dutch case.

The Dutch university sector includes 13 public universities; there are very few private universities in the Netherlands. The universities differ in maturity, range of disciplines, and size, but there are no significant differences in academic standards or achievements. For this study, all 13 public universities were invited, but only seven participated; six declined due to confidentiality of appointment procedures and time scarcity of the support staff.

Characteristic of the Dutch academic career system is the 'formation principle' that distinguishes it from Anglo-American models. It entails that people can only advance to a higher level when a position at that level becomes available, not when they qualify for that level. Each step up the academic career ladder requires a vacancy. Academic positions at the higher level are scarce and a professorship is viewed as highly attractive. Formally, the recruitment and selection process for professorial positions is regulated by university protocols that prescribe that vacancies need to be announced publicly. However, we have shown that scouting is the predominant way to identify eligible candidates (Van den Brink, 2010). In this paper, we take this further by examining the complex dynamics of gender in networking.

Research Design and Data Collection

Network research tends to prefer quantitative methodologies to measure network structures and patterns, and less attention has been given to the less quantifiable aspects of interactions (Ibarra et al., 2005; Neergaard, 2005). Quantitative methodologies are less able to capture the context and content of network relations, failing to take the activities of networking (Shaw, 2006) and human agency (Kilduff and Brass, 2010) into account. A few authors make a plea for network research to be more qualitatively oriented and focus on networking activities (Hollstein, 2011; Jack, 2005; O'Donnell and Cummins, 1999; Shaw, 2006). Studying networking calls for a qualitative methodology to acquire an understanding of human behaviour and the reasons behind human behaviour (Bluhm et al., 2010); it investigates the 'why' and 'how' of networking and provides insights into practices that are largely routinized and taken for granted.

In order to capture these networking activities, we turn to a practice approach to be able to focus on what people are actually saying and doing in daily interactions (Yanow, 2006). There is no unified practice approach (Corradi et al., 2010; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki et al., 2001) and this is reflected in the variety of methodologies to study social practices. Practice based studies rely heavily on ethnomethodology, in which the most suitable methods for examining practices are participant observation and accompanying in-depth interviews; that is, actually seeing what people say and do (Martin, 2006; Nicolini, 2009; Yanow, 2006). Networking practices relevant in professorial recruitment happen in many places and different times (Czarniawska, 2007), for instance in committee meetings, at conferences, and in informal gatherings and consultations. The spatial and temporal dispersed nature of gatekeeping complicates the study of networking practices as they unfold. Unfortunately, numerous efforts to arrange an observation of the interactions between gatekeepers or observation

of committee deliberations were in vain; such access was not granted due to privacy issues. In our view, information from interviews and documents represents the next-best way to come to a situated understanding of networking and gender practices in recruitment.

While realizing the obvious limitation of using interviews to study practices, interviews are a suitable method to capture accounts of practices. In the interviews, the gatekeepers systematically reconstructed their networking practices in recruitment. The accounts thus gathered are taken as practices that help us to analyse how gatekeepers grant access to top positions through informal relations and interactions and also how they legitimize their practices of granting access to some and not to others. Interviews have been used before to collect rich stories and narratives about gender practices in settings as diverse as multinational corporations (Martin, 2003), ICT (Kelan, 2010), and nursing care (Simpson, 2009). In line with those studies, we argue that the gatekeepers' accounts of networking practices are a prolific entrant into gender practices. The interviews created the conditions in which people could be more or less reflexive about practicing gender. Their accounts of gender in networking allowed us to make tangible the dominant conceptions of masculinity and femininity in recruitment.

The first author interviewed 24 women and 40 men from different subfields (humanities, social science, natural science, and medical science) in the positions of deans, vice-deans, directors of research and teaching institutions, faculty, and/or human resource managers. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their recent experiences as scouts and committee members (involved in at least five procedures). For the open, in-depth interviews, a general list of topics was used. The interviewees' interests and experiences dictated the order and way in which these topics were discussed. While we acknowledge the limitation of hindsight bias in the interviews, we have focused the interviews on systematic reconstructions of networking activities in recruitment. Interviewees were encouraged to describe the recruitment process in detail, focusing on how they identified potential professorial candidates and whom they consulted about eligible candidates and their reputations. We encouraged interviewees to talk about concrete (although anonymized) cases and incidents, not in generalities. In addition to these interview data, we also used various kinds of documents as background material and complementary information. Information from recruitment and selection protocols from different universities was used to understand the social world of professorial recruitment and the crucial role of networking in it.

Data Analysis

Our analysis rests primarily on abductive reasoning, moving back and forth between theory and empirical material (Van Maanen et al., 2007). All interviews were transcribed and coded. We used the computer software program Atlas-ti to systemize and code the data because its mapping method is useful for identifying key issues, concepts, and processes.

We started by breaking the text into relatively small units of content. Interview topics served as a first guide for this coding process (Silverman, 2006). The text was scanned for essential words and phrases connected to topics as the initial recruitment, the search for

candidates, and selection. This coding process provided a large number of codes that stemmed from the topic list, the data, or both. This first phase showed that scouting and informal networks are dominant patterns in the accounts of interviewees. This resulted in a selection of the empirical material that is central to this paper. The data were thus reduced to those accounts that involved networks or networking.

In the second round of coding, the data on scouting and (in)formal networks were coded again. Some codes remained, others were added: such as using informal connections, advertisement and job profile, seeking references, and visibility of candidates. These first order networking codes (see Figure 1) prompted us to go back to theories about networking and come up with the ideas about networking as a practice and the crucial role of agency. This helped to identify the second order themes (Gioia et al., 2013) of networking practices: inviting and nominating, asking recommendations, and building reputations.

Noting how some actors serve as gatekeepers, we turned to the literature on gatekeeping and derived the analytical concepts of inclusion and exclusion. By looking at inclusion and exclusion from a gender perspective, we recoded the material along these lines and came up with a list of first order gender codes. By categorizing these codes, we noted a pattern of systematic inclusion of men and analysed these as the gender practices of identifying with the similar and reproducing the success model. We noted how the inclusion of women occurred in a different way, leading to the identification of the second order gender practices in networking of creating opportunities.

To understand the dynamics of these gender practices in networking, we turned to Martin's theoretical insights on mobilizing masculinities. This framework was chosen because of its focus on inclusive processes of men and masculinities and allowed a more systematic analysis of the accounts on how gender was done by gatekeepers in formal and informal networking. Going back and forth between the theory and the data, we had to extend Martin's work to understand why female gatekeepers expressed a preference for male candidates. We needed to theorize whether women can take part in mobilizing masculinities and what constitutes mobilizing femininities. Our analysis of gatekeeping thus led to the identification of the aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013) of men mobilizing masculinities with women participating in their activities, and women mobilizing femininities in networks, with men participating in their activities. Through these different steps in the analysis, we developed a theoretical framework of gender in networking that provides insight in how networking perpetuates or counters gender inequalities.

NETWORKING PRACTICES IN PROFESSORIAL RECRUITMENT

In the subsequent sub-sections, following common prescriptions for qualitative research (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007), we intertwine a detailed description of our findings with theoretical reflections. We zoom in on gatekeepers' accounts of networking. We distinguish three ways in which gatekeepers use their networks in professorial recruitment: inviting and nominating candidates, by asking recommendations, and by helping candidates to build a reputation of excellence. We illustrate the practices with quotes that have been selected because they convey most powerfully the experience that was

First order networking codes	Second order themes: <i>Networking practices</i>	First order gender codes	Second order themes: <i>Gender practices in networking</i>	Aggregate dimensions
Information about vacancy Visibility of candidate Being asked Using informal connections Advertisement and job profile Selection of candidates Socializing Small world Spotting	Inviting and nominating	Natural identification Men might identify easier with men The brotherhood of men Similarities between scouts and candidates Preferring men Opportunities (times and places) to network Male bonding Confidence of men candidates Men's world Crown prince Younger version of oneself Image of the professor He, him, guys Tradition Quality standards Women do not aspire a professorship The preponderance of men over women Women apply with less power and more ambivalence Implicit associations over the role of women Dedication to academia Search for women Extra effort Equality policies Role model Special chair Supporting women Careful Quality Female friendly Balanced composition Dual career couples Pressure from faculty/university board	Identifying with the similar	Mobilizing masculinities
Seeking references Solicit nominations Calling/approaching colleagues Trusted network partners overview of eligible candidates checking out candidates	Asking recommendations		Reproducing the proven success model	Women participating in mobilizing masculinities
Name dropping Visibility of candidates Quality of candidates Excellence Recognition Lobby Toppers Giving credit Renowned scientists	Building reputations		Creating opportunities	Mobilizing femininities
				Men participating in mobilizing femininities

Figure 1. Coding structure.

expressed by interviewees. Table I provides additional data. To secure anonymity, pseudonyms are used to depict the interviewees.

Inviting and Nominating

The majority of positions were not advertised at all; inviting candidates to apply is common practice in the Dutch context (Van den Brink, 2010). Potential candidates must be invited to apply or be explicitly directed to a vacancy; it is difficult to apply for professorial positions without the interference of gatekeepers. Self-nominations are not always welcome and connections to gatekeepers are often crucial to be considered as an eligible candidate. Gatekeepers described how they actively sought out potential candidates in their networks and sounded out whether they are interested in the position. Without visibility to gatekeepers, there is a reasonable chance that a candidate will not be invited to apply or will not be informed about a professorial position. This networking practice is referred to as scouting for candidates.

Certainly, if it's quality you want, you have to make a conscious decision to call, write or go to conferences and ask: 'who are the good people, who should we approach?'. You have to do that, always. (Ed, professor, natural sciences)

Ed presents one of the main arguments for scouting for professorial candidates, which is the opportunity to attract the best academics, or the quality argument. Scouts can act fast and proactive to attract favoured candidates to their institution, before they are lured by competitive institutions. The second main argument for scouting was the assertion that scouts have a superior overall view of eligible candidates in their fields, the overview argument. Scouting proponents said advertisements yield no applicants other than those they had already considered, so they saw no need to announce positions publicly. The propensity of scouting points to a crucial role of networking in the search for candidates.

Asking Recommendations

Gatekeepers also use their network connections to solicit nominations. When they are looking for candidates, they ask advice and recommendations from trusted network partners. This is a networking process with important consequences as it confines the potential candidates:

I have simply approached a number of international colleagues and asked who are the good young people? We are going to hire someone, can you give me names of people who you think that we should consider? Then you can just suffice with two or three sentences explanation per person. A good young guy [sic] who recently was working in Paris, and now in Munich. So to say that is someone to look at and then you talk to other colleagues like so and so mentioned so and so, do you know them? What is your opinion? Very much like that and then you filter pretty quickly who to pay attention to. (Charles, director research institute, natural sciences)

Table I. Second order themes and supporting quotes

Second order themes	Supporting quotes
Inviting and nominating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During our trip from Amsterdam, we talked about dr. X [as possible candidate for a professorial position]. In my opinion, he is one of the most brilliant employees of the clinic. It would be a shame to see him go. (email correspondence in appointment report) • Then I started to search for suitable candidates myself. And I have to say, they are not always easy to find. A great deal of luck is involved and you need a lot of contacts. . . . And yes, we found someone, a very interesting gentleman. I said: 'would he be our guy?', and the chair said: yes, I think he's nice. Where does he work? 'In Zurich'. He said: 'let's do it, bring him over'. And that person finally got the job, I think we had a deal within six weeks. (male professor, natural sciences) • Certainly if it is quality you want, you have to make a conscious decision to call, write, or go to conferences and ask who are the good people, who should we approach? You have to do that, always, even when it is an open procedure (male professor, natural sciences)
Asking recommendations	<p data-bbox="448 949 464 1419"><i>R: No, I don't think so, he doesn't know everything. But he will find out very easily – just one telephone call to a colleague. Deans have very wide networks. It is mainly just a matter of confidence. (male professor, natural sciences)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of course, even if you are not a committee member, someone might drop by and say 'we have someone applying from Germany. You know the German scene; can you check what the situation is?' (male professor, social sciences) • Well, I think that, informally, it still works that way. The full professors meet on many different committees. They know who is leaving, who is retiring and where a position is going to become vacant. They all know that . . . If a current professor is leaving, he will discuss it with his people: 'Well guys, I will be leaving next year.' And I can imagine very clearly that, collectively, they will then keep a closer eye on what is happening at the medical centres, who looks promising and who might be suitable and literally 'check him out'. Because in the end, a university board, whether mine or from another university, will ask the leaving professor how the recruitment process is going. 'Where can we find good people?' But that isn't a formal part of the procedure. These are informal scenarios. (female professor, medical sciences)
Building reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks play an important role, and your own public relations strategy. By showing off that you know important people in the field, or colleagues of scouts and committee members who know you. (female professor, social sciences) • When a candidate aims for a professorial position, of course he is not going to shout 'hello, take me!'. No, he will arrange for other people, academics whom he thinks are influential, to recommend him. This often happens. (female professor, medical sciences) • When you are not on the 'dance-card' of a mighty professor, then you can forget it (female professor, humanities) • You know, in practice you know these people. In any case the colleagues who are there [on the committee], they know that person and they immediately say something like 'that is absolutely nothing'. (male professor, natural sciences)
Identifying with the similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many committees exist of men only. Men might identify themselves easier with men. (male professor, medical science) • That sense of brotherhood between those men, it is not a conscious exclusion like 'we don't want women'. It is more complex and subconscious. It is a combination of sentimentality and achievement, and that is given a lot of weight. They mix it up with the concept of quality. Because that 'important' speaker had enjoyed the presentation of the other men enormously, they seem to have a kind of homo-erotic bonding. 'A spiritual twin!' You can't get involved in that [as a woman]. I said to my female colleague: 'What is going on here?' (female professor, humanities) • Many of these decisions are not made during meetings . . . be aware of that. As a woman, you are often not there when they take a little nightcap. Women don't have the same time to lobby in the bar, and it is more difficult to become visible in that way. (female professor, social sciences) • When everyone is getting together and making the deals, my children have to go to bed. (female professor, humanities)

Reproducing the success model

- (referring to him, he, his continuously)
- The chair should be respected by the staff . . . they should say 'hey, I might not agree with *him*, but I trust this *guy*, we're going that way'. (male professor, medical sciences)
- (after showing a blind resume) 'this is a hard working *guy*' (male professor, humanities)
- The difficulty with our university is, is that it is harder to provide a job for the partner. We often have to facilitate something for *the wife* as well, when *he* is coming from abroad. (male professor, natural sciences)
- A full professor is someone who goes the extra mile. *He* should know what *he* wants and take the lead to take the department into that direction (female professor, social sciences)
- You can imagine that someone has been very valuable for the hospital, someone who is not really 'eligible' for a professorship, but people really value *him*. (female professor, medical sciences)
- Because they do not make themselves visible enough in places where *men* put themselves in the spotlight. *Women* don't do that enough. Only doing your job and then bicycle home, is not enough to make a career. (female professor, medical sciences)
- There is really a search for women. There is a clear understanding that when you have the possibility to find a good female candidate, you

Creating opportunities

- always have to try to take some extra effort. (male professor, natural sciences)
- If you don't do nothing, nothing will happen (female professor, medical sciences)
- We have this policy, that we want to change some things here. It would be good for the influx of our students population too. Women attract more women, and if we can attract more female students by having good female professors, then we are certainly going to open our eyes. We put an effort on it, and we also ask the female network of professors to recommend names. (male professor, natural sciences)
- Men always say: 'They [women] are not available; there is a lack of potential. I always respond: 'That's rubbish'. I searched high and low for a woman for that position, and found one, of course. I notice that in our field there really ought to be more women. (female professor, medical sciences)
- Positive discrimination on the grounds of sex, I find that ridiculous. In all circumstances, I will vote for the best. (male professor, natural sciences)
- I have been in the fortunate circumstance that in some important appointments there have been some high-quality female applicants. And I can say that I fully supported the nomination of those women. In fact, in case of one of the professorial vacancies I certainly did my best, and succeeded, to create an additional professorship for the second [female] nominee who was not appointed to the original post. Those women are role models for the students and more diversity is good for our organization anyway. But I attach a certain value to address the fact that both women were not appointed only on the basis of their sex or race, but because they were very well qualified. Otherwise it wouldn't have been possible. (male professor, natural sciences)

Charles points out matter of factly that the pool of candidates is created through network connections. He suggests that little information suffices when the information comes from trusted network connections and is checked within the same circle of connections. By asking recommendations inside one's own network, gatekeepers assume that they have an overview of all eligible candidates in the field. Other studies point out that people form evaluations about others using information acquired from personal experience, observation, and/or third parties (Ferris et al., 2003; Wong and Boh, 2010). This means that informal networking practices have a great impact on who is included and who is excluded as a potential candidate.

Building Reputations

Academics that are renowned in their own field exercise particular gatekeeping power in building the reputations of candidates. When eminent academics recommend a candidate, the reputation of that eminent academic affects the candidate's reputation because people tend to evaluate connected individuals similarly. This phenomenon is called 'basking in reflected glory' (Cialdini et al., 1976; Kilduff and Krackhardt, 1994; Mehra et al., 2006). The reputation of gatekeepers rubs off on the candidates they support. Gatekeepers thus have a crucial voice in the reputation building of academics – in other words, they chiefly decide who is a likely candidate and who is not (Husu, 2004). Reputations can also be built through the suggestion that other universities are interested in appointing that person:

Then people will say 'isn't it about time we appointed this person, otherwise he [sic] will leave'. They will try to include his specific research area in the strategic chair plan. (Dennis, professor, medical sciences)

Dennis's account illustrates that reputations can be boosted and appointments considered when others show interest in a particular candidate. Candidates also profit from gatekeepers that talk positively about them to others. In this way, gatekeepers help to enhance the visibility of the candidates that is important to be considered for a professoriate.

GENDER IN NETWORKING

Recruiting new professors through networking has consequences for the career opportunities of men and women academics. We distinguish three manifestations of gender practices: identifying with the similar, reproducing the proven success model, and scouting women. We end this section with the legitimations that gatekeepers provide for their practices.

Identifying with the Similar

In contexts where men are in the majority, men tend to have more homophilous network relationships than women (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992; McPherson et al., 2001). It is likely that this is also the case in academia in which the gatekeepers are predominantly men.

When these men use their social networks to search for candidates, the likelihood increases that a male candidate will be invited, nominated, and selected. Some interviewees argued that men form networks with other men not only because of the availability of men but also because they prefer working with men, thus referring to both chance homophily and choice homophily. Interviewees used phrases like 'men prefer men', 'rely on', 'he is like me', 'easy', and even 'natural'. One reason these men gatekeepers are more inclined to invite and nominate men candidates, is their perceived similarity and identification with men.

Going beyond organization network studies that explain homogeneities by chance and choice homophily (McPherson et al., 2001), we see explanatory power in gender practices instead of in sex differences. To better understand the how and why of gender homophily, we draw on Martin's (2001) concept of affiliating masculinities. Identifying with the similar is a gender practice of affiliating masculinities, of the connecting and aligning of men with other men. The interviewees who were most aware of men preferring men were women, whereas men seldom mentioned it. Several women respondents argued that men had ample opportunities to network and socialize with other men, and that they felt excluded by the time or place where the networking took place. Most of these comments were related to late-hours meetings, dinners and conferences, or activities such as the 'walking club for men professors'. Women also observed how men gatekeepers invited and nominated younger versions of themselves:

What I also think, senior professors, men, like to coach or take someone in tow who looks like them. And of course, those are the young promising guys, as they once were. And it is crucial to have someone like that. (Betty, professor, social sciences)

This observation was repeated in different accounts. For example: 'I have seen the appointments of crown princes', 'they often look for professors like they had had for the last ten years', 'they see themselves when they were young'. The following quote illustrates how this is done without much reflection:

When men maintain their traditional mindset in which [they think] women are not so interested or they don't even think about it [the possibility of women candidates], they will take other men, because they have always known men in this profession. They know what men can do. Some day women will have children or whatever it is they think women do. If men do not make a conscious effort to think 'she is a woman and she is equally good' or whatever, then I think that without thinking they would just take the man, because they think that they can rely more on the man. 'He is like me'. (Anna, professor, natural sciences)

According to Anna, men are predisposed towards men candidates. They do not consciously exclude women, nor do they consciously include men. She points at traditions and routines that favour men, and not women. The notion of choice homophily used in network studies suggests that a conscious process precedes men's preference for men, but affiliating masculinities is much more a liminal process, something that people are not fully aware of. Men gatekeepers supported men candidates without much awareness that

their supporting meant the exclusion of women. In the experience of some women, men nominated women less frequently than they nominated men: 'And then it is always so in my experience that people very quickly want to bring male candidates to the fore. They also know them better'. Nominating candidates is seen as something that men habitually do for each other and that is experienced as harmful by women. However, preferring men is not only something that men practice, as our findings show that preferences for men candidates also emerge in the accounts of women gatekeepers.

Reproducing the Proven Success Model

The historical overrepresentation of male professors contributes to an image of the academic full professor that is inextricably linked to men and masculinity. Most full professors are, and have always been men. There seems to be a self-evident link between professors and men (Tharenou, 1994), and both male and female gatekeepers linked masculinity to the professoriate in similar ways. When they talk about scouting eligible candidates, the abstract candidates they refer to are always men. In the accounts of both male and female gatekeepers, there were constant references to 'him', 'he', and 'guys'. This connection with masculinity is not restricted to the professoriate, as literature shows that abstractions of professionals are predicated on the ideal of the 'unencumbered' white man who is flexible, mobile, committed, and available (Acker, 1990). This proven success model is a mould that does not fit all candidates. Female gatekeepers note how female candidates have a hard time:

Women have a hard time to acquire positions in that male bastion. That is because men divide the tasks, appoint the candidates, and have an idea of what they consider important and not important in a colleague. And women think that other things are also important and not only that career. (Eveline, professor, medical sciences)

Eveline notes how men make the decisions, and how female candidates do not adhere to the standards that men set. The masculine standards for the professoriate are not questioned, but women's choices and priorities are problematized. It is taken for granted that academia is a male bastion, and that networking practices are decisive in decisions about appointments. This example indicates that not only male gatekeepers see women as deficient when they do not fit the success model. When female gatekeepers align with the standards of men, we analyse that as a way in which women participate in the mobilizing of masculinities. Women cannot mobilize masculinities in the same way that men do, because this is a collective practice of men connecting to each other. However, we argue that women take part in the mobilization of masculinities when they take for granted the masculine model of success.

Creating Opportunities for Women

Gatekeeping does not always result in men appointing men. It can also provide opportunities for women to be selected for a professoriate. The third gender practice in networking differs from the previous ones in that it sets out to counter gender inequalities in academia.

Spurred by equality policies, male and female gatekeepers sometimes actively search for and support female candidates. The number of female professors in the Netherlands is so low (12 per cent), and in some subfields below 5 per cent (Gerritsen et al., 2009), that most university boards are willing to search explicitly for women candidates when a professorial vacancy arises. Some universities even make special positions available to promote female academics because they consider it necessary to create more gender balance in their departments. Notably, those positions are often personal chairs. Ordinary chairs in the Dutch context are structural positions, and professors have the final responsibility for research, teaching, and administration, and are head of the group. A personal chair is a temporary position often created for academics who are individually qualified to become professor, although no formal vacancy is available. Yet, they possess less status and hierarchical power. Gail, a female professor in social sciences, indicates:

The female professor on this special chair has a really hard time. She does not have the same opportunities to build a research group of her own, she is not invited to the chair meetings, and she is really cut-off from the decision making process. (Gail, professor, social sciences)

While special chairs provide opportunities for some women to become professors, they also create gender differences between professorial positions that reproduce the status quo (O'Neil et al., 2008). It may appear that the advantage men receive when men mobilize masculinities is counteracted by creating specific positions for women. However, this is not necessarily the case because the personal chairs women are appointed to are less influential than the ordinary chairs men are appointed to. Systemic inequalities are not being addressed and new inequalities come about when women are predominantly appointed to personal chairs.

Network research has repeatedly shown that men's networks contain mostly men and that women have both women and men in their networks (Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1992, 1997; McPherson et al., 2001). This implies that female gatekeepers have more knowledge about women candidates in their networks, and are therefore in the better position to scout women candidates.

The only person who deviated [from men selecting men] was my female predecessor. She was an old acquaintance of mine. I knew her from another university and I worked with her. That's why I came here. Indeed, I owe a lot to other women. I am very aware of that. (Hannah, director, graduate school humanities)

Hannah remembered how she was recruited through her network connection with a female colleague and that this connection was crucial for her being appointed. Other female gatekeepers described that they involved formal women's networks. They claimed that searching for women takes effort, but that the effort pays off, and implicitly doubt that men take the same effort. This is an interesting finding because it brings to the fore that there is an equivalent to mobilizing masculinities, which is mobilizing femininities in networking. We note here that women mobilize femininities when women take the extra effort to search for other women. Female gatekeepers thus mobilize affiliating femininities

when they set out to find and encourage female candidates and support the candidacy of women. This is the gender practice of identifying with the similar. Yet, female gatekeepers mentioned that it is harder for women in their minority position to recommend or push forward a female candidate because it smacks of favouritism or they are 'blamed' for making feminist choices. This makes it less likely that women mobilize femininities in the same unconscious way as men mobilize masculinities, because their support of other women is highly visible and not so easily taken for granted. As Irene noted:

The chair of the committee called me to announce that he had hired another woman. I shouted yes, well done! And I thought, I better be a bit giggly about it. You always have to be careful, that you are not seen as too fanatical. And I do not want that at all. And I am not either. (Irene, head of department, medical sciences)

This quote illustrates that Irene felt she could not overdo her support for other women, because she did not want to be seen as 'too fanatical'. Between the lines, she was distancing herself from potential accusations of favouritism, and was avoiding an association with activist feminism. She reckoned that affiliating femininities may be experienced as problematic by men and women. It seems that mobilizing femininities is more 'marked' and problematic than mobilizing masculinities. Both men and women gatekeepers pair their scouting and support for women candidates with explicit legitimations.

Legitimizing Preferences

The accounts of gatekeepers provide insides in the gender practices, and they also contain legitimations of the practices. Choices were not legitimized by the similarities between the candidates and committee members, nor by the similarities between candidates and the success model. Rather, the interviewees legitimize their choice and support for candidates with arguments of quality of candidates. Professorial recruitment decisions are high risk decisions with serious long-term consequences for organizations and individuals. Gatekeepers depend on trustworthy network connections to reduce risks and to preserve quality standards. We have seen that they do so by linking trust to conceptions of quality that are implicitly rooted in perceived similarities and/or proven masculine models of success. We do not question the quality of the male candidates that get this support, but do note that gatekeepers do not habitually ascribe the same qualities to female candidates. The data provide examples of how gatekeepers consider female candidates' 'otherness' as risky. Two key reasons were given for this perception of risk: the perceived lack of quality of female candidates, and the social complications of gendered interactions.

A first example of questioning women's qualities concerns the assessment of the leadership and management capacities of female candidates (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012b). Some interviewees said 'Women have less authority'; 'They [women] are not going to make it because they are too nice or too kind'. Unless female candidates had a strong reputation and extensive managerial experience, gatekeepers expressed reservations about their management capacities. Interviewees mentioned examples of women who were rejected because of inadequate management skills, yet the issue of

management skills was not raised as frequently as a reason to reject men candidates. The question is whether these women did not bring adequate management skills or that their skills were perceived as less adequate by gatekeepers who are accustomed to and recognize only specific manifestations of such skills (Carli and Eagly, 1999).

A second example concerning qualities pertains to women's alleged lack of visibility. To become visible as an eligible candidate, the invitations, nominations, recommendations, and reputation building activities of elite academics are crucial. Visibility is thus something that is granted, and not only an individual endeavour. However, both male and female gatekeepers do emphasize the individual responsibility for academic visibility. They commented that male candidates are explicit about their ambitions, whereas women are more 'modest' and 'reluctant' to promote themselves. In other words, they note how female candidates are not making themselves visible enough and hurt their chances to obtain a professorial position.

Interviewer: Is it possible that people who haven't promoted themselves or made themselves visible enough are not mentioned when people are asked to recommend names?

Respondent: Or they do not name themselves. And that is something of a problem, I think. It probably illustrates the difference between the sexes. Men tend to put themselves forward more easily than women and also make sure that their name is put forward by those with influence.

Interviewer: How do they do that?

Respondent: By asking the dean: 'Would you recommend me for that position?'

Interviewer: Can you ask for that in this way?

Respondent: Yes, and women never do that. (Frank, professor, medical sciences)

Frank took pride in the assertive way men promote themselves and ask superiors to recommend them for positions. He saw women's failure to self-promote as a woman's problem, for which women are responsible. It goes unnoticed that women who do engage in self-promotion are often socially sanctioned for their non-feminine behaviour (Heilman and Okimoto, 2007; Rudman and Glick, 2001). It is thus not unproblematic for women to make themselves visible in academia. Furthermore, that the dean could take action to put women forward is a scenario that did not occur to Frank. Above, we illustrated how men candidates benefit from a support network that is considered normal academic practice. However, there is ample research evidence that this is a male support network that benefits male candidates, whereas women cannot profit to the same extent (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001; Hewlett et al., 2010; Ibarra et al., 2010).

The second reason women are seen as risky pertains to the social complications of gendered interactions. One example of this is the perception that female candidates take more time to decide if they want to participate in the procedure.

In a committee, we are going to challenge and check out the candidate to see if their response is enthusiastic enough. And then it often turns out that women's responses are not eager enough. Also in the early stage of approaching potential candidates, you

often get a reluctant attitude, at least that is my experience. (Marc, professor, natural sciences)

In this quote, Marc addresses the expectation that candidates immediately jump at the opportunity to become a professor and that they respond positively and without hesitation. Men candidates live up to this expectation, but when women candidates do not and ask for time to consider the offer, this raises questions about her commitment. A lukewarm reaction means that repeated attempts are needed to persuade her, which is considered a fuss. In a competitive context where professorial positions are coveted, gatekeepers are not always willing to put in the extra effort.

Another example of social complications was brought to the fore by Ben. He reflects on men's preference to same-sex interactions as easier and devoid of the delicacies of heterosexual tensions. Although some interviewees reflected on this issue, others may have been reluctant to raise it because sexuality is considered unacceptable in professional organizations (Burrell, 1984; Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Riach and Wilson, 2007). Ben talks about sharing a part-time position as a full professor with another man:

Interviewer: This person was also a man?

Respondent: Yes, he was a man. Yes, and otherwise it would not have been possible. My wife would not have approved, if it had been a woman. Yes, that would have been very delicate. Sometimes I say 'he is my professional spouse'. I spend more time with him than with my wife. It can be very complicated. You have to be very careful.

Interviewer: Is that something that matters? Being in men–women relationships at work I mean?

Respondent: I never noticed that, honestly speaking. No, I don't think so. Although, of course . . . but you should pose this question to my wife, she probably thinks once in a while: 'What is going on there?' Given that my field consists entirely of men, I can tell her at home, and I always do, that there were only other men at the conference and we had an extremely pleasant time. But I think that she would find it difficult if I were to go abroad for some weeks with a nice thirty-year-old post-doc. And I can understand that perfectly. So, I do not think I could have shared this role very easily with a woman, no. Precisely for those reasons. And that had nothing to do with men's and women's comparative abilities but it would have been a little delicate. (Ben, professor, humanities)

Ben, who works in an environment with many young female academics, reflects on the difficulties of cross-sex work relationships and the possibility of sexual undertones. He states that it had nothing to do with men's and women's capacities but with feeling at ease and avoiding awkward situations. Such views tend to over-sexualize the work relations between women and men (Beatty, 2007) and contribute to the exclusion of women from men's informal gatherings, networks, and ultimately, from professorial positions (Hewlett et al., 2010; Martin, 2003).

We found a different line of reasoning to legitimate the search and support for women candidates. Various arguments were used as to why the appointment of more women professors is important:

I think it is very strange when those girls [students] enter, in substantial numbers these days, from other disciplines, that we confront them then with five years of study in which they do not see a single woman. That shouldn't be possible! So yes, we have to do something about that. (Jonathan, professor, natural sciences)

Jonathan notes that women faculty are needed when the numbers of women students rise. Gatekeepers see the need for women role models for students and junior faculty. They also point to the need to make use of all available talent to ensure the highest quality research, and stressed that women could be the best candidates. Finally, some gatekeepers legitimized their preference for women candidates because of the special contribution of women to academia. They said that women have a positive influence on the climate of a research group. They emphasized the special feminine qualities that women bring to the workplace that make it more friendly and collaborative.

We note how the strategies used to search for and support women are more often closely scrutinized compared to those used to search for and support men, as they trigger concerns about the quality of the women candidates. Even though they were willing to search for women candidates, this search was explicitly legitimated and justified and most men and some women gatekeepers stressed that gender should not become the basis for hiring if quality is compromised. Searching for women triggered concerns about preferential treatment of less qualified women, and unfair competition for qualified men. Controversy thus surrounds the search and support for women:

In my opinion, the faculty board has to make every effort to appoint women to vacant chairs, if it is possible in any way. And search for them explicitly. So we will have a more balanced professorial staff. But, I don't think you should appoint a woman at any price. If only because it's very unpleasant to be nominated for a chair when everyone thinks 'Well, she only made it because she is a woman'. That doesn't serve the cause. . . . One should always give priority to quality so that less qualified women do not get positions that otherwise could have been given to better qualified men. This will only make women look bad. (Jack, dean, humanities)

Jack illustrates the opinion of many committee members who were willing to search for women but not at the sacrifice of losing quality. Searching for and supporting women was associated with helping women who are not able to succeed on their own merit. Quality was presented by the interviewees as gender neutral and the core value for any candidate to be appointed. However, several scholars have questioned the alleged gender neutrality of academic quality, noting how selection committees cannot detach quality from the person embodying it and are prone to systematically underestimate the qualities of academic women (Valian, 1998; Wennerås and Wold, 1997).

DISCUSSION

The point of departure for this study was the lack of theoretical insights on gender in networking. We developed a theoretical framework to study gender practices in networking that enables us to come to a better understanding of how networking

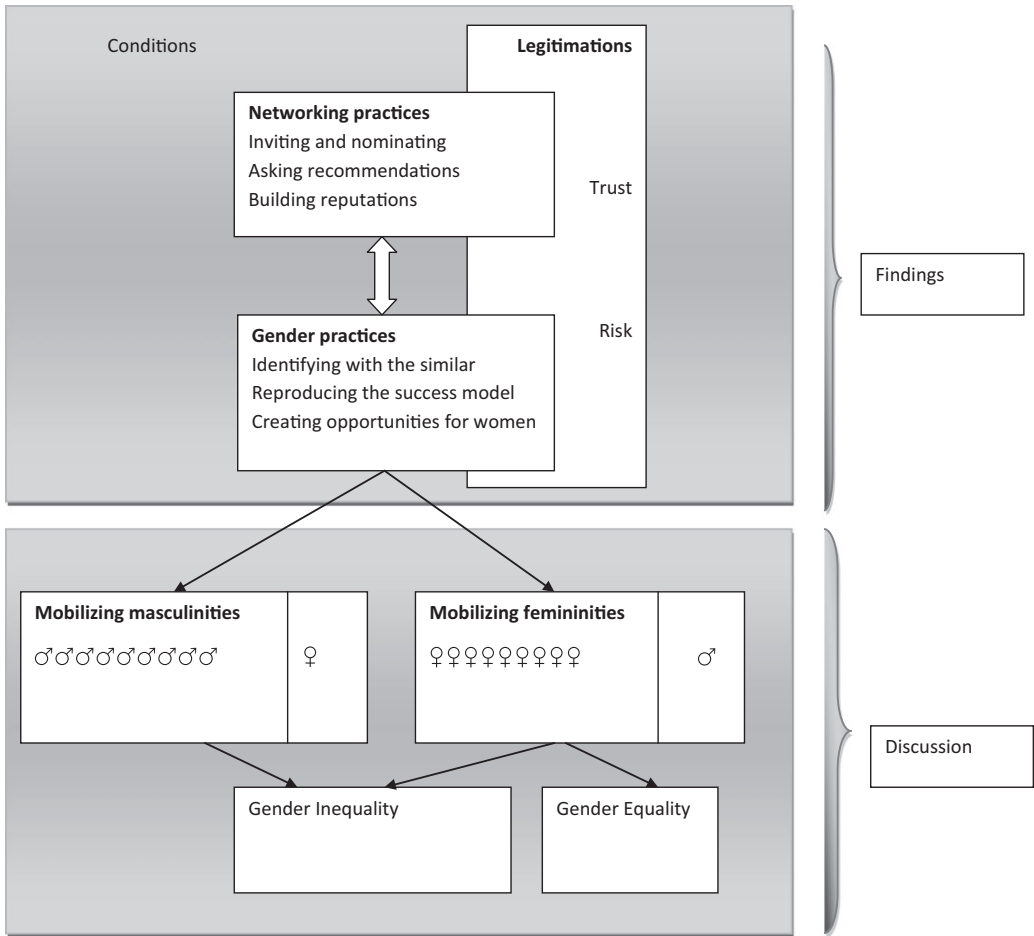


Figure 2. Theoretical framework of gender practices in networking

activities bring about or counter gender inequalities (see Figure 2). The empirical material illustrates how this framework is particularly salient under the conditions of limited transparency of procedures and accountability of gatekeepers, perceptions of scarcity of qualified candidates, mores of recruitment by invitation, and the presence of equal opportunity policies. The upper half of Figure 2 shows how these conditions spur networking, specifies which gender practices occur in networking, and highlights how gatekeepers legitimate their practices. Subsequently, we theorize this gendered networking further in the lower half of the framework. We draw on the aggregate dimensions of mobilizing masculinities and mobilizing femininities to explain how gender inequality and gender equality are produced.

Conditions for Networking

This study sheds light on the key actors, the gatekeepers, who control the access to powerful positions and identifies the conditions under which their networking activities

can become quintessential in the recruitment for top positions. This importance of networking can be attributed to the following conditions. First, many procedures are closed and even though open recruitment is required, this practice of closed procedures is widespread and seldom contested. The practices of closed recruitment are not limited to Dutch academia, but are observed in other top recruitments as well (Holgerson, 2013; Khurana, 2002). Relatively little transparency and accountability is required of decision makers who write appointment reports, but not necessarily information-rich ones (Van den Brink, 2010). Second, the market conditions are presented in such a way that the scarcity of potential qualified candidates and the need to attract them fast is emphasized, so that the war for talent will not be lost to the competition (Kubler and DeLuca, 2006). Fast actions do not go very well with elaborate procedures and the need for speedy decisions creates opportunities to go beyond formal regulations. Finally, the mores of recruitment by invitation for top positions require that aspiring candidates need to be invited and discourage people to apply themselves for professorial positions. It is repeatedly shown that gatekeepers overlook certain candidates and that open rounds for grants or positions result in many more qualified candidates than anticipated, especially when women candidates are concerned (Benschop and Brouns, 2003). Nevertheless, gatekeepers are assumed to know all eligible candidates in their field, and are supposed to use that knowledge to preselect the best candidates. Under the condition of equal opportunity policies, gatekeepers are also deemed of crucial importance. They are tasked with searching and scouting women candidates, and we have observed that particularly women scouts are involved. These conditions lead to a situation that bestows a great deal of power in gatekeepers, who are given a mandate and are trusted with the task to scout the future high-profile members of the elite.

Gender in Networking

A main contribution of this study pertains to the simultaneity of networking and gender at work. Insights from our study suggest that gender practices are at work that privilege inner circle candidates and deny access to outsiders to the effect that the pool of potential candidates is confined to a small and rather homogeneous group of men (Wright Mills, 1956 [2000]). The network literature uses the notion of homophily to explain the preference from male gatekeepers to network with male colleagues. We have argued that homophily explanations have shortcomings which can be overcome by a social practice approach to gender in networking. Using this approach enables us to show how men's connections are not conscious choices, but rather liminal practices that men are not fully aware of. It can also explain the preference of female gatekeepers for male candidates. In the theoretical framework, we identified two aggregate dimensions: mobilizing masculinities and mobilizing femininities to theorize the gendered interactions of men and women at work.

We observe mobilizing masculinities when men gatekeepers naturally identify with the men in their networks. In the accounts of gatekeepers, there is reference to many ways of connecting to other men, both to the men who are invited to apply and whose reputations are built, and to the male eminent colleagues whose recommendations of the quality of candidates are asked. In line with Martin (2001), we analyse this as the

mobilizing of masculinities in networking, in particular affiliating masculinities. We see how men routinely use their formal and informal network connections to other men in ways that benefit themselves, others, or both. Using network connections at work are intentional practices, but affiliating masculinities are predominantly liminal gender practices. The liminal nature of affiliating masculinities means that men use their connections without awareness that their actions are viewed as masculine bonding. Their accounts showed that men do not consciously intend to include only men in their networks. They use arguments of quality to legitimate their preferences and are not aware that they practice gender this way. However, the data also point out that it is mostly women who noted these affiliations of men with other men on the basis of trust and perceived similarities. The women indicated the many possibilities that academic work offers to men to connect to each other informally. Women thus experience the exclusionary effects of the informal networking practices of men.

In response to the question of the role of women in mobilizing masculinities, we argue that women cannot mobilize masculinities in the same way that men do, because this is a collective practice of men connecting to each other. However, our results show that women can take part in the mobilization of masculinities. This works through the gender practice of reproducing the success model. In the accounts of women gatekeepers, we have observed how they align with men in networking practices when they take for granted the masculine standards and images of the professoriate. They trust candidates that fit the conceptions of quality that are implicitly rooted in proven masculine models of success. As a result, men candidates are considered more qualified, and women candidates are considered risky. Again, this is a predominantly liminal gender practice, as the standards are abstracted and the inherent masculinity of those standards remains unnoticed. With this notion of women participating in mobilizing masculinities, our study develops Martin's earlier notions of mobilizing masculinities.

While the practice of mobilizing masculinities is predominantly liminal, it does illuminate the agency of gatekeepers. It shows how their routine use of formal and informal network relations reproduces gender inequality.

We answer Martin's call for further work on femininities relative to masculinities practised in organizations. By developing the notion of mobilizing femininities, we are able to theorize the role of the few female gatekeepers in academia. This helps us to understand the way women use their connections with other women to support women candidates, and how this can remedy the exclusion of women. Analogously to Martin's (2001, p. 588) definition of masculinities, we define femininities as practices that are represented or interpreted by either actor and/or observer as feminine within a system of gender relations that gives them meaning as gendered 'feminine'. We argue that women mobilize femininities by acting in concert to either distance themselves from other women (contesting femininities) or to align with other women (affiliating femininities).

Our study provides the first empirical insights in mobilizing femininities. Examples of affiliating femininities in our data pertain to the accounts of women gatekeepers who talk about how they align with other women and scout and support women candidates. Women gatekeepers engage in the networking practices of inviting and nominating, asking recommendations, and building reputations for women candidates. In terms of

gender practices, we observe some parallels between mobilizing masculinities and mobilizing femininities when gatekeepers identify with the similar sex. Interestingly, one important difference concerns the suspicion these gender practices evoke. Scouting and supporting women run the risk of being associated with nepotism or radical feminism. Whereas mobilizing masculinities was framed as problematic by women only, both men and women considered mobilizing femininities a problem. This problem is framed in terms of quality. The gender practice of creating opportunities for women is often constructed as challenging meritocratic principles. Our study shows that the mobilizing of femininities is marked and the women who practice affiliating femininities are well aware that their practices are scrutinized. The precarious nature of affiliating femininities necessitates that choices for women candidates are legitimated explicitly with quality arguments. In the accounts, two types of quality arguments are used: one pointing at the academic credentials of female candidates, the other referring to the special contribution of women (Alvesson and Billing, 2009). These special contributions of women range from their function as role models to their alleged feminine qualities of care, community, and collaboration.

In line with the question about the role of women in mobilizing masculinities, we also looked at the role of men in mobilizing femininities. Analogously, men can participate in mobilizing femininities when they scout and support women candidates. The search for women candidates was mainly prompted by equality policies and the low number of women professors. Some men gatekeepers in our study recognized the need for extra effort to appoint women professors.

Overall, we conclude that the gender practice of mobilizing femininities is a more precarious and marked practice than mobilizing masculinities. Mobilizing femininities in networking is intended to counter gender inequalities, but is only partially successful.

Outcomes: Gender Inequality and Gender Equality

The literature on gender in networks mostly discusses the exclusion of women from influential networks (Burt, 1998; Ibarra, 1997). What is distinctive about our study is that we demonstrate the networking practices of inclusion. The accounts of practices have provided us with a better understanding of the role of agents in creating, reinforcing, or countering structures of inequality. Identifying with the similar and reproducing the success model are routinized practices that include men with only liminal awareness of doing so. The data have demonstrated how these practices are legitimized with conceptions of trust and risk. Elite positions are influential and therefore the appointment decisions are high risk decisions with serious consequences for organizations and individuals. Gatekeepers depend on trustworthy network connections to reduce the risks. We argue that men gatekeepers mobilize masculinities when they base feelings of trust on perceptions of similarity. There can be similarity between the gatekeepers and the candidates, but also between the candidates and the proven success model. Our study shows that women gatekeepers trust men candidates based on this congruence between the masculine image of the professor and men candidates.

Trust and risk are closely connected. Women are perceived as riskier candidates, as perceptions of their competence, congruence, commitment, and credibility (Fleming

Cabrera, 2010) do not coincide automatically with the proven success model. Our study shows how the trustworthiness and riskiness of candidates are socially constructed in and through gendered networking practices. Through constructions of 'who you can trust' or 'who is a risk', gatekeepers exercise the power of inclusion and exclusion and contribute to the persistence of structural gender inequalities at work.

We have also shown the gender practice in which mostly women, but also men gatekeepers create opportunities for women, resulting in the inclusion of women. This gender practice sets out to counter gender inequalities. Indeed, these agents break with the routinized practices of trusting men. Their efforts are successful in terms of increasing numbers of women as professors (Gerritsen et al., 2009), top managers (Tienari et al., 2013), and board members (Vinnicombe et al., 2008). The accounts of gatekeepers show how they explicitly legitimate and reflect on their practices when they scout and support women candidates. The candidacy of women does not coincide with the success model, and thus the qualities of women are often questioned and women are perceived as riskier. To create opportunities for riskier candidates needs to be explained. Therefore, mobilizing femininities is such a conscious and visible practice.

Unfortunately, the practices intended to change structural gender inequalities do not always turn out as intended. Such practices may have short term outcomes; the statistics may look better but normalized gender practices are not changed. First, they create gender inequality in a novel way when women are more often appointed to personal chairs and positions with less power and status than ordinary chairs and positions. Furthermore, the mobilizing of femininities is an intentional practice in which gatekeepers are prompted by equality policies. Scouting and supporting women may have some momentum now, but it is the question whether these practices will ever become as routinized as the support that men receive. In the long term, mobilizing femininities may not be able to alter the mobilization of masculinities in routine networking practices and counterbalance the disadvantages for women in regular appointment procedures.

CONCLUSION

The central aim of this article has been to develop a theoretical framework to understand how networking practices perpetuate or counter gender inequalities in organizations. Through the analysis of the accounts of gatekeepers illuminating their networking practices, this study extends previous work on sex inequality in networks (Brass, 1985; Burt, 1998; Durbin, 2011; Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Ibarra, 1997) and on inclusion and exclusion in the networks of elites (Husu, 2004; Weber, 1980 [1921]; Wright Mills, 1956 [2000]). Our study sheds light on how gatekeepers practice gender in networking by (a) identifying the networking practices gatekeepers routinely use in recruitment, (b) showing how those networking practices are intertwined with gender practices, and (c) showing how those gender practices in networking produce or counter gender inequalities.

This framework allows us to make two important contributions to network studies. We problematize and challenge previous organization network theories (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011) by combining a practice-based approach and feminist constructionism (Lorber, 2005). The first contribution is the elaboration of networking as a practice.

We conceptualize networking as the dynamic, socio-political practice of building, maintaining, and ending relations at work for personal and career benefits. Through the notion of networking practices we gained insights in micro-level activities of gatekeepers that produce organizational outcomes in local conditions. This adds to the network literature as it emphasizes human agency; it shows how agents routinely use networks to distribute resources such as information, advice, and support among a select group of people. The second contribution concerns the attention for gender in networking. We introduced the more sophisticated notion of gender as a social practice in organization network studies. This can capture how agents produce or counter structural power inequalities in and through gendered networking practices. Mobilizing masculinities and femininities demonstrate there is more to networking than chance and choice homophily. The notion of choice implicated in network studies suggests that a conscious process precedes the preference for men, but we have shown that affiliating masculinities is much more a liminal practice, something that men are not aware of and that happens unreflexively. We conclude that the lack of awareness of routinized gender practices in accounts of networking is an important explanation for the persistence of structural gender inequalities. Practices intended to counteract inequalities do not always succeed as they may have unintended consequences such as the production of new inequalities (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012a).

We also contribute to the literature on gender practices. We extended the notion of mobilizing masculinities and introduced the notion of mobilizing femininities to go beyond individual doings of gender (Martin, 2001). These notions call attention to informal relational processes in which men and women act collectively to align and/or distance themselves from other men and women respectively. This provides us with the unique possibility to reveal the taken for granted networking practices of inclusion. We demonstrate that there are similarities between men mobilizing masculinities and women mobilizing femininities in networking. However, there is an important difference: the routines of mobilizing masculinities in the workplace are not paralleled in mobilizing femininities. Women who engage in affiliating femininities are keenly aware of their activities and portray them as intentional strategic network behaviour. With regard to the question whether women can mobilize masculinities, we contend that mobilizing masculinities is a concerted action of men that women can participate in but cannot initiate. For instance, when women present themselves as 'one of the boys', take men as a reference point, and prefer to work with men (Powell et al., 2009), they participate in mobilizing masculinities. Similarly, men can participate in but not initiate mobilizing femininities.

While the emphasis on networking practices and the sophisticated conceptualization of gender have furthered network studies, we acknowledge the limitations of this study. A first limitation concerns the use of single interviews to study networking practices. Despite numerous attempts to observe committee meetings, permission was withheld because of privacy and confidentiality. Future research could use observations of academic gatherings and conferences to capture and analyse the dynamics of gendered networking practices of gatekeepers. Shadowing techniques in which the researcher follows the gatekeeper's daily work can shed light on the temporal and spatial dispersed practices of gendered networking. A second limitation is that this study has focused on

gender, but gender practices do not occur in isolation. They are closely linked to other forms of social inequality, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality. Future research could examine how gender intersects with other categories of inequality at work to understand the relative salience of multiple identities in networking in different settings. Using the concept of intersectionality in networking adds extra depth to the understanding of the complex reproduction of social inequality (Holvino, 2010). Another fruitful strand of research could examine the mobilization of femininities in networking in more detail. By studying appointment procedures from the perspectives of different actors involved, the micropolitical strategies that women gatekeepers use to support women candidates contribute to our insights on mobilizing femininities. More attention for women gatekeepers and their potential contribution to gender equality is needed to further develop the theory of gender in networking. Insight into network practices that can actually bring about equality can complement the insights of this study on how informal networking practices produce gender inequalities.

As for the implications of this study, we note that it invoked a lot of discussion in and beyond academia. The media published extensively about it and critical questions were posed to the Minister of Science and Education to account for the non-transparent appointment system. This study has refuelled the discussion on gender inequality in Dutch academia and put it on the agenda as an issue that universities bear organizational responsibility for (Van den Brink, 2010). Beyond academia, our theoretical framework can inspire broader studies on gender in professional networking as it illuminates how elites grant and withhold access to top positions through informal relations and interactions.

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