

Contemporary fairy tales: Narrating women academics through metaphors

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Iceland
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ProGender

A Digital Hub on Gender,
the COVID-19 Crisis and its Aftermath

The project is implemented by:



Words open up worlds

- "Man made language" (Dale Spender)
- "Language and women's place" (Robin Lakoff)
- "Women, fire and dangerous things" (George Lakoff)
- "Images of organizations" (Gareth Morgan)

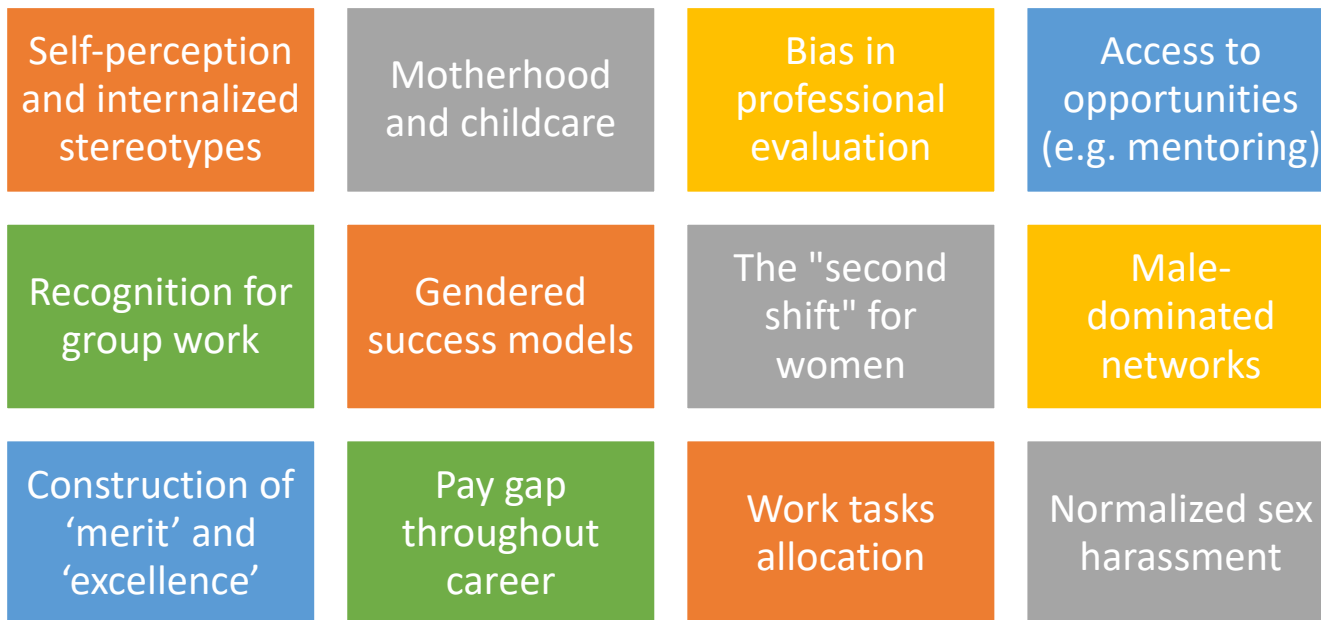
“Metaphors”

- Literary images, not meant to be taken literally
- Example: academia = the “ivory tower”
- Metaphors create bridges between different worlds (or semantic domains)
- Word comes from Greek, meaning “to transfer”, “to carry across”
- Some metaphors on women academics used for decades in the media, in scholarly papers, in white papers → now raised to status of set phrases

Examples

- Ivory tower
- Glass ceiling
- Leaking pipeline
- Chilly climate]
- Institutional housekeeping

What is the problem (implicitly) represented to be?



Metaphors...

- Frame issues (*what is the problem represented to be?*)
- Suggest explanations for phenomena
- Create success models: professional winners / losers
- Trace boundaries: the possible and the impossible
- **All of the above remains *implicit***
- **Today's focus: global discourses**

The social organization of science & academia

Local dimension — The Lab & the Dept as a work environment

- Local community, direct interpersonal relations
- Local discourses

Glocal dimension — Inter-institutional & international networks

Global dimension — A worldwide community?

- Communication codes and channels accepted as the international standard
- Set the tone of international debate, create a shared imaginary
- **Global discourses (beyond context?)**

12.4.21 | Women scientists during the pandemic

Women scientists during the pandemic

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zoom

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What is the problem represented to be?

Issues in focus

1. Productivity = output of peer-reviewed scholarly papers
 2. Childcare and domestic labour (as obstacles to productivity)
-
- Constant output as the norm (even in global crisis)
 - Violations need to be justified with other types of output
 - Assumption: disruptions to measurable productivity arise from other forms of measurable productivity

What is the problem represented to be?

Language use: metaphors

Question

- In the same scholarly literature
- **Metaphors on the impact of COVID19 on women scientists & academics**
- Global publication channels = global discourses

Findings

Domains metaphors are taken from:

1. **Technology:** boosting devices
2. **Sports & play**
3. **War**
4. **Natural disasters:** but with built-in patterns of privilege

Examples

1. Technology: “magnifying glass”, “amplifier”
2. Sports & play: “No tickets for women in the COVID-19 race”
3. War: “Lost ground: female academics face an uphill battle”
4. Natural disasters + privilege: “In the same storm, but not in the same boat”

The images we use – and us.

- What kind of **imagery** are we activating?
- Does imagery *reveal* our way of thinking?
- Does imagery *affect* our way of thinking?
- Can imagery influence *behaviour and power relations*?
- Which metaphors come to mind, when you think of women academics under COVID?