Women’s under representation in academic positions in general and in higher academic positions and in decision making positions, in discipline areas in general and specific areas traditionally considered masculine, disadvantage in research grants and funds and research out puts has been the concern of a large number of studies (Probert, 2005; Pearson, 2004; Shackleton, 2005; Husu, 2000; Brooks, 1997; Park, 1996; Castleman, 1995). These efforts and concerns have largely concentrated on women and their behaviour and experiences of disadvantage.

Studies also point out that these are not sufficient to gaining complete understanding of the situation of women’s disadvantage in the academia, and for a more complete understanding attention and scrutiny should turn on men’s behaviour and their everyday practices and experiences in academic life, how their position of advantage and privilege have been constructed (Hearn, 2001 ; Eveline, 1996; Cockburn, 1991) and how such constructions in turn disadvantage women and their academic advancement and progression.

Hence this paper is an effort to synthesis some specific experiences/findings on micro politics in the academy among male and female academics in Australia and Sri Lanka, which is one of the themes of a broader study that interrogates Male privilege which aims to,

Broad aim
• Interrogating women’s’ disadvantaged position in academia through an understanding of the privileged position of the male academic in Australia and Sri Lanka

Specific aims to;
- examine whether and if so how male privilege is relational to women’s’ disadvantage,
- explore manifestation of male privilege in the academy,
- identify processes within and outside the academy that shape male privilege,
- Identify similar and different trends in Sri Lanka and Australia.
Field data was collected through the method of academic life histories carried out over a period of 8 months (December 2009-July 2010 in Sri Lanka and Australia). The total sample includes 37 academics; 11 M +6 F in Australia and 16 M +4 F in Sri Lanka. The field data was analysed using Foucauldian discourse analysis to illuminate discursive production of gendered power in micro contexts. This paper is based on an analysis of field data with regard to exploring manifestation of male privilege in the academy, in everyday academic life with regard to practices of gendered micro-politics.

Discourses on micro politics in the academy in previous research are multiple. Further, there have been great efforts in gender and feminist research to examine the non-tangible subtle forms of gender politics within the academy that constructs advantage/disadvantage relationality. This constitutes a significant aspect of work relations between academic males and females as revealed in a large volume of literature (Brooks, 1997; Morley, 2006; 2003; Gunawardena, 2005; Krefting, 2003; Dwandre, 2002; Husu, 2000; Osongo, 2000; Bagilhole, 2002; Gloria et al., 2001, Wilson, 2010; Obrien, 2011). The efforts of conceptualizing the reality of micro politics have been done referring to a wide range of terminology such as discrimination and/or harassment (Husu, 2000; Brooks, 1997) male resistance (Cockburn, 1996), chilly climate (Dwandre, 2002) glass ceiling, micro politics (Morley, 1999; Morley, 2004; Morley, 2006; 2003) and male hegemony (Bagilhole, 2002; Thornton, 1989) to include a few. What becomes clear in these reports are the active, overt as well as the informal, covert intangible and subtle nature of male resistance and discrimination on the part of the male academics against females that heavily impact on the disadvantaged position of the females. On the other hand it is an area where very strong, clear and evident privileging of the male occurs in the academy.

Further, Kaplan (1985:19-22) states that it is the norm for men to treat women with verbal and non verbal hostility, ostracism and exclusion from informal networks. Different studies by / (Morley, 2002 :214-215), (2006: 215) and Brooks (1997: 49-51) refer to acts of sexual harassment, and bullying directed at both students and female academic staff as means used to regulate women’s actions and masculine styles of leadership that specifically disadvantage women. These are elusive, subtle, and difficult to capture and leave individuals unsure of the validity of their ‘readings of a situation' and appropriate responses to them (my italics) (Morley, 1999). Further studies by Castleman and others (1995) provide evidence that men in
the academy are relatively more advantaged than women and that these dynamics around advantage may not necessarily relate to merit and in fact undermines it.

Conceptualisations of micro politics for this discussion focus on two specific aspects on which are drawn upon. They include the subtle, pervasive nature of micro politics and the element of resistance.

Some refer to micro politics as ‘hidden transcripts’ of gendered discrimination and gendered power relayed in everyday transactions and relationships. These occur via informal networks, coalitions, exclusions and through formal arrangements through classrooms and boardrooms through symbolic and material constructions that regulate women’s behaviour (Morley, 2006).

Further studies have used the concept of hegemonic masculinity a form of an ‘accommodating masculinity’ which is not totally explicitly dominant but, ascendency which achieved through the subordination of other groups through collective masculine strategies in relation to women (Bagilhole, 2002) especially through resistance. Hence the current analysis draws on ideas of the ‘hidden transcripts of micro politics’ and ‘masculine hegemony and privilege’ to highlight the collective masculine strategies of resistance used towards women in this research to ensure male hegemony and the subordination of women within the institution and in everyday life. These concepts are used to emphasise the pervasive, covert and carefully crafted nature of norms and practices used in resisting women and maintaining masculine control and dominance over them.

The resistant behaviour of male academics is analysed using a frame of overt and covert forms of resistance. Overt or direct forms of male privilege (resistance) include immediate personalised institutional forms of resistance or physical, emotional hurt or put down to women, physical or verbal violence that advantage men. Covert or Indirect forms of resistant strategies include informal institutional practices and cultural habits in everyday academic life that resist or act as deterrents to women’s advancement.

How did the reality around micro politics figure in field data of this research? The respondents were asked what their experiences in the academy related to micro politics were and whether it
was gendered.

**Gendered personalised remarks**

*This is a very male dominated area... I am the only woman in that list of heads around here so of cause sometimes remarks are made... when we got the list of people who got promotions I was the only woman on the level E list and, the head of school said oh! Every man and his dog have been given a promotion!*

(Level E, Health, Australia, F)

A strategic means of micro politics operated in overt control and resistance to women was observed in 'gendered remarks' made that devalue and undermine women’s academic excellence. A woman in Australia with a very good and rapid academic progression referred to undermining gendered comments made by some peer senior academic men informally on her being promoted to level E (Professor).

The informal and the 'out of context' nature of such crude confrontational behaviour and remarks make it sometimes very difficult to effectively respond to such discriminatory remarks and these comments had meant to directly undermine the achievements/advancement of women as secondary and undeserving.

**Resisting female voice**

The control exerted on the few vociferous women in universities was pointed out by some male respondents in Sri Lanka who pointed to his experiences of male chauvinism by other men in the faculty board.

*But at times there are certain male chauvinistic kind of male people staff members who don’t like female faculty members coming in and arguing in the faculty board, especially in the faculty board you can see some of them when the females are vociferous they, some men don’t like it and react...(watti amma like -like a fish wife) at least I heard one person say (watti amma wage katha karanna epa) which means you know ...so that was one occasion.*
These overt mechanisms are frequently adopted rude deliberate strategies to undermine women’s confidence and to rule out challenge to dominated male opinion. Women are constructed less attractive and/or unfeminine women because they are vociferous, thus exerting pervasive strategic gender sensitive means of personified control. These reports revealed that women were also resisted, ridiculed or insulted when they were vocal and different, challenging and resistant to gendered discrimination. Men express their resistance by hailing embarrassing remarks at women in public formal forums and if women resist such insults and control, then they are constructed as unfeminine and less worthy.

**Gendered control through management powers**

_I was lucky as I was a male in a female profession, and I saw terrible things done to females I can give you examples She was appallingly treated... she lost her voice from lecturing and she was [trying to] get work compensation and the male administration threatened her if she went down that path,... they then tried to get rid of her because she didn't have a higher qualification, not many people had higher degrees in those days, and she was just completely marginalized, she left [her post]._  

(Level C, Education, Australia, M)

Some male academics reported experiences that signified extreme mechanisms of control and male power in administrative positions utilised to cause appallingly detrimental effects on female academic career. The sheer helplessness of women in such situations had been aggravated by their gendered status in society.

**Resistance in recruitment**

_(Do they ask are you going to be married and are you going to be pregnant?) Yes, that kind of thing and often such issues [does] come up. For instance when the children are studying somewhere else how will it affect their performances? those kinds of things are there. But the plight is that these academics either don’t have a good family life, that is the price they sometimes have to pay when you are so focused on academic work._  

(Professor, Arts, Sri Lanka, M)
Another means through which women were resisted was observed in some comments made by male academics regarding recruitment of women to academic positions. A few Sri Lankan men’s responses at decision making level articulated this bias explicitly. The recruitment of pregnant women or women wishing to get pregnant in future was represented as a liability. Their responses revealed often that women were queried about family or personal plans during the interview, though similar questions regarding having children or raising a family would not usually be raised from men. Such practices are overt means of institutional resistance towards women’s entry and progression in an academic career.

Resisting the ‘feminine’

*Even here we have had problems where female academics have been fighting with male academics. One finally left anyway. I don’t know. May be frustration or whatever. There are things like certainly females are much more emotional than males. So these things come out and we see that and therefore problems can happen.*

(Senior Professor, AScience, Sri Lanka, M)

Another example of the resistant attitude was obvious in constructions of feminine emotionality as unsuitable disposition and even irrational for decision making roles. A similar dimension of above constructions of lack was displayed with regard to leadership and management positions too. Generally the leadership is constructed with a masculine face to it. This was common in the academia as well. Although not made explicit in such, the traditional gendered ideologies and expectations underlying these positions were highly resistant to female-feminine intrusion. This was evident in some men’s responses in Sri Lanka where Deans and Vice Chancellors positions were frequently held by men. These duties and positions are traditionally ‘seen’ as masculine work/jobs hence assigned to men. The positions such as student counsellors and managers are also recognised as academic positions of power in promotion evaluations.

Resistance to female mobility

*If [men] have some work to do [they] can come to the Department, your room at anytime, no body questions you and you can come with anybody male or female but if I come with a male they all get very curious 'who is that person?' want to know 'but even if I want to I cannot come here and work at night because although it is allowed that is again going against the
culture, so women won't come and work like that. If we came frequently, it will create another problem. So we don’t work in the evenings or week-ends as a rule

(Senior II, Science, Si Lanka, F)

The lack of freedom of mobility within the institution and in engaging in field work for research was evident in some responses by women academics. Some women reported being controlled further by such norms and being constrained and limited in their academic advancement as a result. One was through the cultural practices and norms within the institution concerning what is and is not socially acceptable appropriate feminine behaviour in Sri Lanka that inhibited research output that lead to scandals if women in some departments remained after hours to work on their academic work. Since sexualised remarks and scandals are considered most disrespectful and tarnish the image of the ‘good woman’ some women reported that they never ‘dare’ work after office hours to save themselves from an otherwise disgraceful situation.

Even with funding my work is difficult because, my discipline is field based...so being a woman it is difficult to visit my sites and work like a man, because I can't leave early or come late due to culture...always I should have an escort with me.

(Senior Lecturer II, Science, Sri Lanka, F)

Similarly, engagement in field based research was a serious challenge to Sri Lankan women academics due to cultural practices. The traditional practice of women not travelling after dark unchaperoned, especially in rural suburbs which consists about 75 percent of the country’s land proves extremely challenging and impractical in the context of an academic career. However, in certain institutions and also among different groups of people and individuals these may subject to variation, and a certain amount of reverse resistance may be exercised.

Sexualised resistance

What I have seen is this, that there is a male who is touching and all that I haven’t had that experience but there have been some like that.

(Senior II, Science, Si Lanka, F)
Without doing any harm, I was a source for various rumors and sexually associated fabrications like that, I have very bad experience especially...if you are climbing up the ladder, and particularly men don't like it.

(Senior Lecturer II, Science, Sri Lanka, F)

Another way women’s behaviour kept in control evident was through gossip, remarks of sexual nature and in the nature of sexual advances motivated to resist the advancement of female academics’ as was experienced and reported by some Sri Lankan female academics. They stressed on practices of gossip and sexualised fabrications hurled at them when ambitious as de-motivating, pull down mechanisms targeted especially at all ambitious women. On the other hand the male academics’ were reported as absolutely free from such mental and physical trauma. When inquired about sexual harassment they neither appeared worried, concerned nor aware of such possibilities in most of the male responses.

**Dress codes**

*We are supposed to wear ‘saree’ for academic work which I suppose is [quite unfair] why only for us? This is the situation of this university, why only women, I was [told] once you cannot come to the examination hall in a dress; you have to come in a 'saree'...then, I should have asked from that person what about men? They wear T-shirts, denims, sandals and they also sometimes have long hair, why only us? Nobody asks that question.*

(Senior Lecturer II, Science, Sri Lanka, F)

Differences in the configuration of micro politics were evident in Sri Lanka prompted by its different cultural practices and traditions. A significant informal practice that women were concerned about and experienced discrimination in was, the pressure imposed on them through dress codes. On the other hand the privilege accrued to men was expressed in terms of the relative freedom enjoyed from being free from dress codes. In a context where women often having to efficiently manage family affairs and academic work, draping oneself in six yards of cloth were expressed as considerably restricting brisk movement of the body for example walking fast and also considering hot weather conditions in Sri Lanka. Female academics observed 'saree' largely as an adornment on special occasions rather than a practical dress to adorn every day.
Intersectionality

However, significantly the findings also showed that sometimes the micro-politics within the academia is not confined only to gender but often constructed along the differentiation and the hierarchical social ordering. Interestingly the experiences of Australian academics represented two main trends, one was in relation to class and the dynamics around it. The other was how micro politics figured itself in the experiences of minority academics that divide indigenous and non indigenous. Further, interestingly certain male academics also expressed insecurities concerning professional jealousies by men towards ambitious men and its effects on them.

Well I am disappointed about certain things, though I had the chance to present at a lot of conferences and still I feel that I should have been in the majority [main ethnic group] then, I would have got a lot of chances.

(Senior Lecturer II, Economics, Sri Lanka, M)

Another aspect of micro politics relate to ethnicity and politics experienced by some academics of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. He said belonging to a minority ethnic group had been a barrier to his academic advancement due to possible subjectivities in decision making. He explained that frequently the issues arose within the Tamil medium, somehow those received secondary attention within the hierarchy of academic administrative decisions.

Conclusions

Gendered resistance through micro politics is both overt and covert- institutional, formal as in the case of recruitment in to senior decision making positions or where hard earned promotions are concerned. These take shape through informal and cultural mechanisms such as gendered traditions and norms especially pertaining to physical mobility, gossip or violence. The findings of this research also confirm that configuration of micro politics is not confined to gender but inter sectional and interweaved with other social structures of class, race, ethnicity etc. Micro politics is therefore, multiple in nature and awareness of which is essential for effective strategic interventions for enhancing women’s position in the academy.
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