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Welcome Ground for Women Faculty in Academe: An International Perspective

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Welcome Ground for Women Faculty in Academe: An International Perspective

With the continued documentation of a persistent hostile or chilly climate for women in academe (Blum, 1991; Cooper, 2002; Curtis, 2005; Glazer-Raymo, 1999), questions arise about whether women faculty can find a home or welcome ground, both in the United States and around the world (Caplan, 1993; Cooper, Benham, Collay, Martinez-Aleman, & Scherr, 1999). The literature identifies a number of differing ways of viewing the academy as home. For example, Jane Roland Martin (2000) refers to the academy as "the home of thought" (p. 41). In discussing this concept, many women academics talk about finding or forging, if not a home, then *welcome ground* or a *neighborhood*. Whatever the term, the connotation is one of a place that is friendly, rather than hostile; one that counters the chilly climate image that Sandler and Hall (1986) have written about.

This article explores the question of finding a home or welcome ground by asking if these concepts are relevant both in the new millennium and in the international arena. We examine the experiences of women academics in three countries: the United States (US), Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ), and Romania (Ro). We build on the recent exploration of US women's efforts to find or forge a home (Cooper, Ortiz, Benham, & Scherr, 2002; Cooper, et al., 1999), and explore this concept in three countries that are geographically distant from one another. They are vastly different in size, from the giant United States to the tiny New Zealand, as well as culturally, politically, and economically different. We share the stories of twelve women, four each from the US, NZ, and Romania. Because experiences are embedded in the particular socio-cultural, political conditions of the individual country, the next section will describe existing research about women's experiences in each country.

Women's Experiences in the US

The chilly climate for women in the academy in the US has been well documented, from the initial work of Sandler (Sandler & Hall, 1986), to the work of Aisenberg and Harrington (1988), to the recent work of Glazer-Raymo (1999). Although Sandler began writing about the chilly climate for women in US institutions of higher education in the 1970s, new evidence suggests that the environment is still hostile to female faculty, staff, and administrators. For example, the stories of women of color (Rains, 1999) and lesbian women (Estes & Lant, 1998; McNaron, 1997) suggest that the climate is still very chilly. Despite the growing numbers of female students and faculty, many of the equity issues cited in earlier reports have not been resolved. In some cases, new reports indicate that the situation for women has deteriorated. Across the US, for instance, the number of female professors has increased since the early 1970s, but their proportion of the total faculty has remained the same, since the total number of faculty has also increased (Blum, 1991). In addition, women are more likely to be either non-tenure track or part-time. In 1996, 22% of full-time women faculty was non-tenure track, bringing the total of either non-tenure track or part-time female faculty to 62.4%. When they do obtain

tenure track positions, women are still rarely able to reach the highest rank of full professor. In 1993, only 17.2% of full professors in higher education across the country were women (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). This continuing chilly climate for women means that more women also leave the profession. For instance, in the Wisconsin system of higher education between 1981 and 1990 its 27 campuses hired 1,281 women as faculty members. In that same period, however, 955 female professors left the system, about three-fourths of the number hired (Blum, 1991).

This research underscores the need for a greater understanding of the ways in which women who stay have been able to find welcome ground or make a home for themselves in the academy. Beyond the ways in which women might survive in this environment are larger questions about being at home in an often hostile world. An examination of these questions was begun by Cooper, et al. (1999). Their research indicates that finding a home in the academy rests on change in both individual and institutional practices. While their work does not deny the responsibility of institutions of higher education to make efforts to welcome and support both women and men, it focuses on the importance of individual reflection and action. They report that the process of finding a home involves constant reflection in an effort to understand both identity and belonging. It then requires that women take action on their own behalf.

The experiences and efforts of women in the academy are not made in a vacuum. They are embedded in the social and political environment of America at the dawn of the 21st century. Women received the vote in 1919 and have been free to be more active in US political and professional arenas since that time. The center of women's struggles for equality after 1919 was the National Women's Party, which turned its attention to passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This struggle spanned the next four decades "in the face of generally hostile public opinion that caused significant structural strain within the party's ranks" (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 12). While other laws, such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, have advanced the cause of women, the Equal Rights Amendment was derailed in the 1960s and has never been passed. The civil rights, women's liberation, and student protest movements of the late 1960s did, however, serve to advance women's rights indirectly. One of the strongest deterrents to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s was the New Right movement, organized by Phyllis Schlafly, and centered on family values (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). These anti-ERA forces were able to successfully persuade a skeptical electorate that ERA threatened traditional American values. While the efforts of feminists to advance the rights of women have certainly made great strides in the last century, the American political scene at the beginning of the 21st century is a complex web of interacting forces. For example, in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, candidates courted "the women's vote." Yet, both candidates also claimed to be good Christian men who adhere strongly to American family values, the same argument Phyllis Schlafly used in derailing the ERA. Thus, the strong influence of the moral majority is still felt in American politics and will continue to be felt with the re-election of George W. Bush as president. Because of the on-going debate over abortion rights, the US is one of the few nations that still has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Women's Experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Aotearoa/New Zealand is a small island nation in the South Pacific with a long and proud history of social reform. Between the late 1800s and the 1970s, NZ was considered a world leader in social reform. In 1893, it was the first country in the world to give women the vote, and in 2000 women held the top five positions in the country (Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Attorney General, Chief Justice, and CEO of Telecom, the largest company in New Zealand). With the introduction of a new system of voting in 1996, there are more women and Maaori Members of Parliament, although still well below their representation in the general population. Despite the progress that has been made, women are still underrepresented in positions of leadership in almost all sectors. They earn 80 cents for every dollar earned by men, and are overrepresented in the statistics on poverty and domestic violence. Maaori and Pacific Island women fair particularly poorly.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Aotearoa experienced extensive economic and social reform. These neo-liberal reforms were pervasive throughout all sectors (for example, education, health, and social welfare) and dramatically changed the way services were delivered. Previously, the government had a "hands on" approach providing almost all services using the tax payer's dollar. During the 1980s and 1990s, the government stepped back, reduced taxes, reduced spending on social services, and increased situations in which the user pays for such services. Ironically, the world once again looked to New Zealand as a shining example of neo-liberal economic and social reform.

Education was not exempt from these reforms and in 1989, partly in response to the inequities experienced by women, girls, and Maaori in education and partly (although some would say mainly) to save money, a process of restructuring education was started, which continues today. Tomorrow's Schools (Lange, 1988), as the reforms were commonly referred to, had as one of its aims to increase the representation of women in school leadership positions. In 1993, if you were a man you had a 1 in 3 chance of becoming a school principal, and if you were a woman you had a 1 in 27 chance (Slyfield, 1993). These inequities were paralleled in higher education.

The documentation of women's experiences as faculty in NZ (Brooks, 1997; Middleton, 1999; Wilson, 1995) is very similar to the experiences of US women. Institutions of higher education in NZ are described as "masculinist" institutions with limited career patterns for academic women" (Brooks, 1997, p.1). Brooks claims that "lip service is paid to equality in the academy, which is then undermined in numerous and effective ways" (p. 2). In terms of women's representation, particularly in senior academic positions, women and Maaori are seriously underrepresented (McKinley, 1995; Wilson, 1995). Despite Equal Employment Opportunity policies, the situation only marginally improved over the 10 year period of 1985-1994. During this time, however, the proportion of women in part-time faculty positions increased by 10% (Wilson, 1995). In comparison to their male colleagues, women are overrepresented in untenured positions and junior faculty positions; are more likely to be teaching in the "soft" disciplines such education, social work, arts and humanities, and social sciences; and have a lower publication rate (Brooks, 1997). In 1991, statistics on the most senior university positions revealed that only 3.8% of full professors and 7.5% of associate professors were women, and only one of the 15 vice-chancellors was a woman (Brooks, 1997).

These statistics, however, tell us little of the women's experiences in the academy. The studies carried out by Brooks (1997) and Wilson (1986) on New Zealand women faculty found evidence of high workloads, feelings of isolation, some experience of discrimination and harassment, and a lack of role models and mentors. Personal narratives highlight attitudinal and institutional barriers experienced by feminist faculty working for change (Ball, 1999), and describe the very high workload of women faculty who also hold administrative positions (Middleton, 1999). Like the US, in the UK (Eggins, 1997), Australia (Blackmore, 1998; Morley, 2005), and Canada (Rees, 1995) it has been the feminist lens and theorizing brought to bear by feminist academics and researchers that has exposed the impact of institutional hegemonic practices on women's experiences as faculty in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In these countries (the US, UK, NZ, Australia, and Canada) research has been relatively extensive. The same cannot be said of Eastern European countries such as Romania.

Women's Experiences in Romania

Like the New Zealand government, the Romanian government, since the introduction of democracy in 1989, has been developing an increasingly "hands off" approach to the delivery of services. However, in comparison to the US and New Zealand, the Romanian government still remains very involved in the lives of its citizens. Even though there is a much greater involvement of the free market in Romanian society, the government still provides essential services such as education. For example, although it is very competitive for students to be accepted in universities, once they do, apart from a very small fee, tuition and accommodation are free.

To better understand Romania today, it is important to at least briefly explain what life was like in Romania during the communist regime. When considering the position of women in Romanian society today, which includes women faculty, the influence of the socio-cultural and political contexts cannot be overestimated. Harsanyi (1993) commented that "the enduring and entrenched peasant culture provided the traditions, values and moral standards for the whole country" (p. 39). In Romania, both peasant culture and communism supported clearly defined gender roles, despite the rhetoric of communism that preached equality of the sexes. Romanian society has always been, and continues today, to be very patriarchal.

Due to a quota system during the communist regime, women were well represented in leadership positions, particularly politics. However, gender anomalies still existed. For example, women who were single, divorced, or childless found it very difficult to gain promotion. The communist ideology supported both women in the home, preferably with many children, and women working for the state. Giving birth was a patriotic duty so the state would not be short of workers during the time of intense industrialization. In 1966, an anti-abortion law was passed that restricted abortions to women over 45 with five children or more under 18 years of age. Contraception, other than condoms, was banned, and women were subjected to compulsory gynecological examinations so that early pregnancies could be detected. Deaths from illegal abortions and giving birth were high. Infant mortality was very high.

There was also a gender division in what was taught in schools with girls taking cooking and embroidery and boys taking woodcarving and metalwork. These measures continued to reinforce the domination of men. Women were almost always responsible for all household chores and for child rearing. Labor saving devices such as washing machines and refrigerators were either not available, too expensive, or could not be operated because of the unpredictable supply of power. So women had to do all chores by hand and queue for hours for basic food.

Housing was also in short supply and as many as three generations lived in a small apartment. Children did not leave home until they got married so living conditions were cramped, and violence and alcohol abuse was common. Life for women was very hard (Harsanyi, 1993; Hausleitner, 1993).

Censorship was common. Images of feminine beauty and women as desirable sexual beings disappeared from TV,

magazines, and newspapers. Harsanyi (1993) commented "Romanian society was even more boring and colorless than that of its socialist neighbors" (p. 45). Former Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's politics were moralistic, puritanical, and misogynistic. University sociology and psychology departments were either closed down or highly propagandized so the experiences of women during this time were not researched and documented. Only recently have Romanian universities begun to re-establish these departments. Romanian feminism, by western standards, is very new and very embryonic. The importance of this becomes apparent later in this paper when the Romanian faculty in this study reflects on their lives.

It was not until 1994 that the first Ph.D. on a feminist topic was completed in Romania, and in 1997 the first MA in gender studies was introduced at Bucharest University (Miriou, 2001). However, what is similar between Romania, the US, and NZ is that women in Romania are underrepresented in faculty positions. Women are 31.9% of the total faculty, professors (5%), readers (25%), lecturers (32%), assistants (45%), and tutors (42%). The more senior the position, the fewer the women (Ministry of Education (1997-1998) cited in Miriou (2001))

Research Design

Qualitative feminist research most suited our need to examine the experiences of participants. The work is feminist in that it draws on Reinharz's (1992) definition of feminist research. It was carried out by two feminist researchers, women's experiences were given centrality, and feminist theory was used in interpreting the data. Each case was bounded by its examination of the experiences of woman academics in the United States, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Romania. Twelve stories follow, all addressing questions about how these women found or forged a home/welcome ground in their professional lives.

This work draws on the theory of intersubjectivity. As feminist researchers working in the academy, we agree with Weiler (1988) that common shared experiences give importance to "lived experience and the significance of everyday life" (p. 60). Likewise, the use of narrative strategies is congruent with feminist research. Narrative, which is rooted in experience, conveys what individuals think and feel as they move through academic life. Narrative or story has the power to teach, to validate, and to embody a collective wisdom which can provide faculty women with both roots and purpose as they struggle to make meaning of their academic lives (Lieblich & Josselson, 1994; Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

The women in this study vary in age, ethnic background, sexual orientation, discipline, and have served as both faculty and administrators. All were interviewed in their own countries. They come from a variety of disciplines, including management, recreation, education, languages, mathematics, food chemistry, and kinesiology. They hold positions from dean to assistant professor. The US women included Moana (40s) who is indigenous and is recently tenured and teaches in education; Cornelia (60s) teaches languages and is about to retire from her position as dean; Lucille (50s) is lesbian and an assistant professor of kinesiology; and Elizabeth (50s) who is a department chair and a full professor in teacher education. The NZ women included Kate (50s) and Gemma (40s) who are both indigenous and lesbian. Kate is a senior lecturer in information technology and Gemma is a lecturer in leisure management. Theresa (40s) is a senior lecturer in management and Kathleen (40s) was a lecturer in management but has since left the academy. The Romanian women included Andrea (60s) and Nina (30s) who are mother and daughter. Andrea is an Associate Professor in food chemistry and Nina is a lecturer in mathematics. Angela (40s) lectures in languages and Daniella in mathematics. All the Romanian women know one another and teach in the same university.

The interviews drew on questions that emerged from the work of Cooper, et al. (1999). Each woman was interviewed in the setting of her choice and at times was involved in repeated conversations as women were given the time needed to reflect upon their own experiences and strategies. Three of the Romanian women were interviewed in English and one in Romanian using an interpreter. Jane traveled to Romania to carry out the interviews and on her return home continued the conversations via email.

Findings

All the women were asked if, for them, the academy was welcome ground. They were also asked to reflect on the notion of the academy as a home and whether in their experience this was a relevant description. There were some commonalities in the stories across the three countries and these were most marked in the stories of the US and NZ women. Three broad categories of findings emerged which included how some of the women did find welcome ground, how some experienced a hostile and toxic environment, and how the women struggled to belong to the academy by at times challenging it and at times withdrawing from it.

Welcome Ground

The concept of the academy as home did not sit comfortably with the women in this study, however, some did find welcome ground in the academy and some made attempts to create a home for themselves. Four women, Cornelia and

Elizabeth in the US and Gemma and Kate in NZ, found welcome ground in the academy. However, feeling welcome was not necessarily something they experienced right away and sometimes it had to be worked at. For example, Cornelia, who immigrated to the US in the early 1970s, was looking for welcome ground in two contexts, a new country and a new job. Cornelia commented, "...on the whole this place [the academy] has treated me kindly." Yet, she was aware that there had been some tough times on her journey to becoming dean, and like the other US women in this study, much of that struggle focused around the process of gaining tenure. Elizabeth also found welcome ground or what she called "a comfort zone" after much struggle. Elizabeth started out in a department in which she felt welcomed. However, her department changed over the years. The atmosphere became "charged, negative, with cliques, hidden agendas, and political agendas." It became a very hostile place. She described it as very wearing. At this point Elizabeth developed cancer and needed surgery. In order to again find welcome ground, she negotiated a transfer to a new department. Now that she has changed departments and is free of the toxic environment she found herself in, she can really notice the difference. "It sneaks up on you. It's hard to notice when you are in it," she stated. Elizabeth describes her new department as "wonderful." "Being smaller, non-field based and delivering only graduate courses, it is a much more doable environment," says Elizabeth. It allows for collaboration while also giving her the individual space she needs to maintain comfort: "In that sense, this is a home-like, or comfort zone, but I can have it and have a personal life outside the academy and this is extremely important."

For Kate and Gemma (NZ), who are both Maaori, even though the academy was welcome ground it was not home. Kate's home was "up north" where she was born, and for Gemma home was where her partner lived. Maaori traditionally view home as where they were born and this brings into question the appropriateness of calling the academy home for indigenous peoples. Another, and somewhat surprising, finding was that unlike many lesbian academics, Kate and Gemma did not find their working environment hostile (Estes & Lant, 1998; McNaron, 1997). In fact, of all the women in this study they were the two that expressed the most satisfaction with their academic lives. Kate even suggested that at times being a lesbian was an advantage: "...sometimes being gay is quite useful because people let you get away with doing things that are a little bit different because they think oh well, you know, she is one of those." Kate and Gemma's comfort may in part be due to the fact that they have a feminist dean with a strong social justice leadership agenda. The previous dean was also feminist and openly lesbian so a culture of inclusion and respect for diversity had already been established.

Facilities and resources enjoyed by the US academics and, to a lesser extent, the NZ academics, were not enjoyed by the Romanian women. In some cases, they did not have what many would consider to be basic requirements such as a desk or a computer. Angela (Ro) commented, "I don't have an office. I don't even have a table of my own or a chair...conditions for us they are not so good." Yet, attempts were made to create a more pleasant place at work by putting flowers and family pictures in their offices. What some women in the US and NZ may find unacceptable, like sharing an office, was seen by Daniella (Ro) as a plus: "I like sharing [an office] not to stay there alone [especially] late in the evening. I don't like to be lonely." She enjoyed the security and friendship of her colleagues as they worked and socialized together in their shared office space. It was also somewhere they could go that was smoke-free as none of the faculty who shared the office smoked. This made their office especially welcome ground. The university where all the Romanian women in this study worked was not smoke free.

Finally, all the women from all three countries found welcome ground in their teaching. They were passionate about their teaching and gained enormous personal satisfaction from their work with students. Even for those women who described the academic environment as toxic, like Moana (US), it was their teaching, research, and their contact with students that nourished and sustained them. If we examine the women's teaching experiences in the academy in the light of Jane Roland Martin's (2000) suggestion that the academy is the "home of thought" (p. 41) then the concept of the academy as home is a better fit. For example, Theresa (NZ), whose experiences of sexual harassment made calling the academy a home abhorrent, enjoyed the intellectual stimulation and challenge she found in her teaching and research. Also, Andrea (Ro), despite being frustrated by the lack of resources and equipment, loved her research work and her teaching: "What gives me most satisfaction is when the students attend [my] classes, when they pay attention to what I am saying, when they are really interested and they are doing their homework." Linking teaching and scholarship goes beyond the academy as "the home of thought divorced from action and theory uninformed by practice" (Martin, 2000, p.41) and firmly locates teaching as a scholarly pursuit. It also grounds scholarship in action and practice.

Enduring a Chilly Climate

Some of the women in this study endured the chilly climate Sandler and Hall (1986) describe; an environment which was shaped by their experiences of harassment, stress, and, in Romania, by poor resources.

Harassment

Harassment was a major reason why some of the women definitely did not experience the academy as welcoming,

but rather as toxic and hostile. Moana, Lucille, and Cornelia (US) and Kathleen and Theresa (NZ) all experienced prolonged periods of harassment from senior colleagues (both men and women), which prevented most of them from feeling positive about their academic environment, although the three US women were able to get to a place of comfort and fit through a variety of circumstances. For Moana, Lucille, and Cornelia, much of the harassment they experienced was associated with the tenure process, which left them feeling angry and powerless, even though they all eventually received tenure. They consciously and carefully implemented strategies to counteract the problems they were experiencing. For example, Moana took up a "terrific opportunity." She had to work with an established researcher from her department who provided her with support and encouraged her to channel her energies into productive endeavors. When speaking of her tenure process, Cornelia states, "I was not an uncontroversial figure in the department. There were people who could not stand me." Another woman in the department thought "only people who were German should teach German. I was not a native German [therefore] I should not be teaching German. I was not the only victim. I was the victim who did not go away. I stayed." However, she did not stay without a struggle. Her first application for tenure was denied. Cornelia's department chair was furious. "I think what made him most furious was that I had done all the dirty work in the department...(so) he asked the president could I please go up again in my last year." The president agreed. Her department chair "made sure that the next time...my application was presentable. He would say, 'Shouldn't you mention this? Didn't you do this?'" Cornelia remembers him as "a real mentor."

Theresa and Kathleen (NZ) also experienced harassment which impacted on their relationship with colleagues and their feelings of safety and professional enjoyment. The prolonged periods of harassment they both endured made it "impossible" for them to view the academy as home. Theresa and Kathleen considered that the gendered culture of their faculty (in the department of management) made it very difficult for them to enjoy their work environment. They had both lost faith in the academy's ability to provide them with a comfortable and collegial place of work.

A senior colleague harassed Theresa, and when she would not support his bid for promotion, the harassment increased and continued via email: "I got the most disgraceful, harassing emails ... about how I was a traitor and a back stabber and my career was dead." Although Theresa did not report the harassment at the time, she did keep copies of the emails he sent, "if there is ever a time that I need that information, I will use it." Theresa's harassing senior colleague, Shaun, was promoted, and it was at this stage that Theresa lost faith in the university: "...no I don't feel like I have a home...I have no faith or trust or commitment...there is no pleasure in being at work."

The harassment Kathleen endured was both sexual and psychological and, apart from her friendship with Theresa, she found little support in the academy. After the death of her baby, at a time when she was extremely vulnerable, she experienced gross insensitivity from some of her colleagues and had to fight to return to work. She explains,

I knew that under the parental leave act that if your baby died I was entitled to go back, as long as I gave a certain amount of notice. So I did all of that. Again, this time it was Tom from staffing, tried to say, well Emma died in the beginning of October and I wanted to come back at the beginning of December. He tried to say well you can't come back in December and he wrote a letter to the Dean because it was non-teaching time and [he] said basically I was trying to do the University in by coming back at the start of the vacation time.

After some negotiation she was able to return to work but found she was unable to go back into her old office and had been given another one in the basement away from her departmental friends and colleagues. Eventually, things were sorted out, the Dean apologized, and she was able to have an office in her department. However, these and other experiences left her so bruised and battered that after eight years she resigned.

Even though the period of harassment for Moana, Lucille, Theresa, and Kathleen was over, the memories were still painful, the experiences raw, and their emotions visible. Moana, Theresa, and Kathleen expressed their anger at what had happened, and much of Kathleen's story was told through her tears. Each developed strategies to help them cope and survive in their toxic working environment. While Elizabeth did not experience harassment, she did describe the environment she found herself in as "toxic" and developed coping strategies, chiefly to transfer to a more welcome ground in another department. We discuss these strategies later in this article.

Poor resources

The reasons why the Romanian women found the academy to be unpleasant at times were quite different from the reasons why some of the US and NZ women experienced a toxic environment. The lack of resources, poor pay, and a smoky environment concerned the women. They were also struggling to cope with the changes in a relatively new democratic environment in which there was less money available for equipment and research. Andrea (speaking through an interpreter) commented,

So on top of the equipment, even the library is poor. It lacks the latest information and general books. I have a hard time trying to get updated with the latest research information in my field. I waste a great amount of time doing manually

things that could be done by machines. I do not have the right machines, the right equipment.

The other Romanian women who also commented on how difficult it was to teach at the standard they would like to when the resources were so poor echoed Andrea's frustration. For example, Angela did not have a computer or an office. Except for when she was teaching, she mainly worked at home as there was no work space for her at the university. This left her feeling isolated from her students and colleagues.

Romanian academics are poorly paid in comparison to other professions, so the low level of pay was a problem. It would not have been possible for any of the women to live on her salary alone. Families needed to have two or more income earners, which meant that often several generations lived together in one small apartment. So, the women were not only coping with their careers but also managing quite large households with little or no help from the men in their families. This at times caused strife in the families. Nina's husband believed that because she was earning so little, it was her responsibility to run the household, an attitude Nina felt was very unfair.

Nina commented on how difficult it was for her to work where the environment was literally toxic because so many faculty members smoked at work: "Yes, very boring [department meetings] and everyone smoking, which is quite a pest ...out of 28 [department faculty] only three or four don't smoke...all of them smoke, women and men...they smoke all the time and everywhere. This is a big problem." Because it is quite legal in Romania for people to smoke in their work environment, the women did not believe they had any power to change this situation. The only other woman to mention poor resources was Kate who was very frustrated by the inadequate car parking which resulted in her spending long hours at work:

I come to work early partly because I'm a morning person but also because of the hassle with car parks. I am not tolerant of driving around trying to find a car park. In fact I become very irrational if I can't find one. It just irritates the hell out of me so I would much rather come to work early and I say to myself I'll go home early and I hardly ever do but that is a real irritant to me.

The women's responses to their working environment reflected their struggle to belong to an environment that was not always welcoming.

Struggle to Belong

In their struggle to belong to the academy, what strategies did the women use and what was their emotional response? Each woman developed her own unique way of coping within two broad strategies of *challenge* and *withdrawal*. These were not the only strategies they used and they were not always discrete but sometimes overlapped; sometimes one was used and then the other and sometimes neither were used.

Challenge

Challenging institutional practices and senior colleagues, particularly when you are untenured, takes courage. Those women that did risked, at best, not being promoted, and at worst, not getting tenure and losing their jobs. However, these women were survivors and refused to be victims. The emotions and feelings that drove them to challenge were anger, disgust, fear, outrage, and a strong sense of injustice and unfairness. The New Zealand women's stories in particular, and to a lesser extent the US women also, were saturated with feminist explanations of the conditions under which they worked. They spoke a language of resistance and challenge.

Theresa challenged in two ways. First, she publicly spoke against the appointment of her harasser as department chair. She was very uncomfortable with Shaun having such power when she knew him to be a harasser. Although she was not successful in challenging his appointment, it took courage as the dean was supporting his appointment. Second, she worked to change the curriculum she was teaching to include socially responsible management practices as she considered that this was not happening in the classroom: "in reality we do a lot of training and not too much education in my view. So my passion is about finding ways to turn that around." Her work in challenging and changing the curriculum was a strategy used to find intellectual welcome ground.

Even though Kathleen eventually resigned from the academy, while she was there she did challenge what was happening. Her extensive knowledge of human resource practices and employment legislation meant she had an informed platform from which to launch her challenge. She knew her rights. The cost was high both in terms of her emotional health and how she was able to work with and relate to colleagues. She commented that her numerous efforts to fight for her rights meant that some, including the dean, viewed her as a "bloody difficult worker."

All the NZ women academics identified themselves as feminists. Their feminism was an integral part of their professional lives and provided them with theoretical tools that helped them to analyze and explain their experiences. A striking feature of all the interviews was how when telling their stories they theorized their own experiences. They

liberally used words such as power, gendered, masculinity, Marxism, control, sexism, racism, resist, patriarchy, hegemony, and challenge. And, in contrast to their Romanian colleagues, they spoke a language of resistance and challenge.

While the US women used less explicit feminist language in describing their responses to challenge, they were nevertheless determined to resist what was happening to them. Cornelia, for example, fought both her failure to receive tenure on the first try and the university's original offer to pay her less than the male dean (her predecessor) had been earning. "It took the regents a long time" to appoint her the dean, Cornelia reported, "because I was asking for the same salary as" the former dean, saying, "You can't pay a woman less than a man."

Lucille refused to sign the evaluation her dean had written which labeled her as someone with "limited probability of success." She told him the evaluation was written based on hearsay and had no basis in actual fact. She then challenged the system by establishing a scholarly record that was beyond reproach. Lucille focused on doing what she loved and on what her students were learning. This willingness to work hard to create an outstanding academic reputation can be seen as a form of challenge to those who would discredit women in the academy. Like Theresa, this effort was one of finding welcome intellectual ground. Lucille now describes her scholarly work as being a piece of a larger whole. She described her teaching, research, and service as "infinite loops that come back on themselves." She feels she is working to make the world a better place and focuses everything she does on social justice and gender issues.

Moana's challenges to the system were much more direct. When she discovered that her department chair was trying to sabotage her tenure application, she confronted the woman directly. When this did not work, she called her faculty union and filed an informal grievance. Her advice to other junior faculty is to "Be gutsy enough to stand up for yourself, to think when you're attacked, 'Stuff you! I've worked hard!'"

Withdrawal

Withdrawal both within the academy and also into their homes was a common response amongst the women, particularly the Romanian women. The language of resistance was not so evident in the Romanian women's stories. Although they had strategies to help cope with the poor facilities and resources, their coping strategies were more likely to involve withdrawal rather than challenge, and they appeared resigned to the way things were. Daniella's metaphor illustrates the philosophic attitude the Romanian women faculty had:

Sometimes [working in the academy] may be like the weather, sometimes bad or a day with rain. After that sunny days with sun. Other times OK. Or, maybe a wave that takes you up and down and after that the sun and the good weather. But you know it's like all our life.

Because of their poor working conditions, both Nina and Angela organized their work so they spent as little time as possible at the university. Nina suggested that their apparent acceptance of how things were was because they were in survival mode with little energy left to try and change things. Also, after years of communist rule, challenging and questioning were not only discouraged but could be dangerous. Being aware of what is possible to do in a changed political climate takes time.

It was not only the Romanian women who used withdrawal as a coping strategy. Theresa withdrew to her home to work and also into her curriculum where she felt she could work to "make a difference." Although Kate enjoyed her working environment, she withdrew from the "busy-ness" of her life to the comforts of her home, even if it was to carry on with her work:

I will just go home and carry on what I'm doing a lot of the time. I've got this laptop of course. It's a real trap because I bought it myself, one of my treats or rewards I think you'd call them, and it was a nice new leather recliner chair from Danske Mobler. Now with the new laptop, I can recline right back with my laptop and this lovely screen. And its amazing how thoughtful I can be. Lying there, breathing the leather.

Likewise Gemma made a deliberate choice, for lifestyle reasons, to move away from her previous work (she ran her own business) where she worked weekends "year in and year out." She now refuses to work weekends and withdraws into her life with her partner. Although this helps to feed her spirit, Gemma commented that there were costs because she had to make sure she got all her work done during the week.

Like Gemma, Elizabeth in the US has found withdrawal to be a helpful tactic. She has withdrawn in two ways. One is a withdrawal from a work life that had taken over and left her exhausted and with a life-threatening illness. The second form of withdrawal was her move to a different department when she found the atmosphere in her first one had turned toxic. Elizabeth claims that making the academy her "home" was her major problem. By not distinguishing between work and her personal life, she created a life with no balance in it. While she admits her life was enjoyable, having her work and her personal life be one proved to be very unhealthy for her. "There were no boundaries to my work life," she says. "I

worked all the time. It kept me in a fairly narrow world.” Her work segued into her private life. Her friends, her travel, and her time away from the office were all work related. She now believes it is healthier to separate professional life. In a sense, she has withdrawn into a personal life that does not involve working all the time. Here withdrawal served as a survival mechanism that allowed her to get well.

Moana describes the use of both challenge and withdrawal tactics. While challenging the negative evaluations she was given by her department chair, she also admitted that it was often hard to come into work, given the toxic environment she was working in. She stated that it was hard to stay in your office and “get beat up,” but too much time away from the office may result in your colleagues complaining that you are not a “team player.” This tension is one many new faculty may face as they attempt to balance the enormous demands on their time with the need for rest and relaxation.

Conclusions

Earlier in this article we asked if the concepts of home and welcome ground in the academy are relevant both in the 21st Century and in the international arena. This study has highlighted that they are only partially relevant.

The stories of these 12 women indicate that the chilly climate as described by Sandler & Hall (1986) still exists. All experienced difficulties in obtaining their goals and finding welcome ground in academe. They used the strategies of challenge and withdrawal to survive (and sometimes thrive) in what was at times a very hostile environment. They needed to be alert and sophisticated readers of their political environment so they knew when to challenge, when to withdraw, and when to seek the help of others. The support of colleagues and friends was vital as their experiences often left them feeling powerless, lonely, and isolated. Elizabeth, for example, found great comfort and intellectual support from her colleagues in her study group. She recommended that new faculty “find really good mentors” who can provide intellectual and emotional support “so you don’t have to go through this by yourself.” Likewise, Moana found a senior colleague who was a powerful mentor to her as she began to develop as a scholar.

As a group these women have much to teach us about unraveling the often tacit knowledge necessary to succeed and about believing in yourself and your ability to contribute to higher education’s goals and values. Their individual and collective journeys provide reflective, yet, insightful perspectives and valuable lessons. Despite their struggles, they have been able to persevere and succeed, largely through their own resilience, tenacity, and strength. As Nyquist, Manning, Wulff, Austin, Sprague, Fraser, et al. (1999) have asserted, higher education must be concerned about the academy’s current values and structural organization and about whether the academy is adequately preparing the kind of innovative, committed, and thoughtful faculty members needed in the 21st Century.

All the women in all three countries exhibited a determination to succeed that must have had a powerful impact on their ability to overcome obstacles and grow professionally. Their experiences and the responses to them serve as powerful models for the ways in which women in academe can not only survive but thrive. They do not deny the existence of a sometimes chilly climate. Yet, while they acknowledge that reality, they reassure women new to the academy that these obstacles are not impossible to overcome.

Although the chilly climate literature has often assumed that male colleagues are the most troublesome for women faculty, Moana, Lucille, Cornelia, Elizabeth, Theresa, Nina, and Kathleen all encountered other female colleagues who were obstructive. The chilly climate for women, it seems, can be perpetuated by men or by other women colleagues.

Heinrich (1995) describes this complex phenomenon in her study of female advisor-advisee relationships. She characterizes doctoral advisement relationships between women as filled with both a sense of friendship and one of betrayal. She asserts that the research on the benefits of female mentors to women’s professional development has produced mixed results. While the women in this study were not doctoral students, in most cases they were in subordinate positions (junior to senior faculty) to the women colleagues who constructed barriers to their success.

Not all their female colleagues, however, were unsupportive. Many went out of their way to help in times of trouble, just as many of their male colleagues did. Perhaps most of all, these experiences underscore the complex nature of relationships in the academy and the ways in which they are not easily categorized. Cornelia, for example, describes the intricate web of support and non-support that faculty women encounter as they enter the academy. Having been mentored by male and female colleagues, she found support not only from her superiors, such as the dean, but even from some part time faculty who actively defended her when she was refused tenure. One woman in particular “got all the troops organized and wrote a letter to the president that this was a shame that I had not gotten tenure because I was such an asset to the department.” “This was a woman (whose)...own employment status was kind of wobbly,” states Cornelia. This woman “wanted more than anything at that time” to have a tenure track position in German. She was part time and Cornelia says, “I think now if I would have left my job, there would have been the position in German” that this woman wanted. “She could just as well have thought, well too bad for Corey, but when she’s gone I’ll apply for the position in German...but no,” states Cornelia, “she was fearless.”

Heinrich recommended that further research be conducted with "double minorities," women who fit this category by virtue of their gender, as well as their racial or ethnic origins. Moana, Kate, and Gemma's experiences begin to meet this call, describing the ways in which the overlay of color and sexuality plays itself out in female academic relationships. Heinrich (1995) further indicates a need for studies which "explore the unconscious forces rooted in mother-daughter relationships that enhance or obstruct women's advisement relationships" (p. 467). The experience of these women hint at the unconscious forces at work in all relationships, male or female, as well as the powerful role a sense of self plays in women's ability to weather the "rough sailing" they may encounter. Lucille's description of her new found confidence and the conviction that her earlier difficulties were "the best thing" that could have happened to her underscores the powerful role identity plays in both the success of women academics and their sense of place in the academy.

Lucille's belief in the instructional value of her professional struggles could not have come without a period of reflection on her circumstances and what she learned from them. These women's experiences affirm the conclusions of Cooper, et al. (1999) about the importance of reflection and subsequent action in the face of difficulty. Like Lucille, Elizabeth reflected on her current circumstances in her department and her subsequent illness. Facing her own mortality she states, "I had to take action. I had to try." This underscores Cooper's, et al (1999) assertion that finding welcome ground in the academy involves constant reflection in an effort to understand identity and belonging, as well as the willingness to take action on one's own behalf. The women in this study did that in both large and small ways. Challenging the evaluation of a dean, as Lucille did, is a large act of courage. Bringing flowers into the office, as the Romanian women did, is a small act, but still a form of taking action on one's own behalf. It is the cycle of withdrawal and reflection coupled with subsequent action which may be the most important element of these women's survival, not a consideration of these coping mechanisms in isolation from one another.

The stories of these women equip others in the academy with both concrete strategies and overall encouragement as they make their own academic journeys. Their experiences provide invaluable advice for others. Finally, their long view brings an in-depth understanding of the adjustments and struggles that continue throughout women's academic careers. Their effort to make a congenial space for themselves also forges new paths for the women who come after them. Amidst a world often filled with invisible and unspoken rules, a world Caplan (1993) describes as "the good, the bad and the perplexing." (p. 3), these women's stories provide hope and possible paths through the terrain of academic life.

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Footnotes

1Aotearoa is the Maori word for New Zealand and means the land of the long white cloud.

2Vice-chancellors are the equivalent of university presidents in the US.

3Nina and her husband have since divorced and Nina has since returned to live with her parents.

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