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Academics at the intersection of age and gender: a Ghanaian experience

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Introduction

The chapter takes an intersectional approach examining the effect of age on the career and workplace experiences of young men and women academics in a Ghanaian university (hereafter referred to as 'The University'). African universities were historically designed and developed as male spaces and the philosophy of African HE has traditionally had a 'malestream' agenda, mirroring colonial antecedents in tradition and reform (Tsikata, 2007). There have been changes to the African academy and there are now higher numbers of female students and staff than there has ever been (Barnes, 2007) although in examining the University of Ghana, Tsikata (2007) argues that change has been slow. Feminist writers on African HE have tended to focus on gender as the overriding factor of inequality. Similarly, with few exceptions (e.g. Snape and Redman, 2003, Garstka et al., 2004) research in industrialised countries has centred on the disadvantages experienced by older workers. However, in the context of a culture that reveres age maturity, this chapter argues that youth is a strong determining factor in the disadvantage experienced by *younger* women *and* men in Ghanaian workplaces. The chapter employs Evett's (2000) multi-dimensional analytical framework on the cultural, structural and action dimensions of women's career progress to examine the work experiences of young male and female academics. Quantitative and qualitative data collected in a Ghanaian HE institution in 2011 forms the basis of the discussion.

Previous research has highlighted the disadvantage and discrimination that women academics characteristically experience in higher education institutions globally. Women in higher education across the world face disadvantage with regards to participation, progression and pay (Morley and Croussouard 2014; AAUP 2014; UCU 2016). In terms of outputs of higher education, i.e. the number of graduates produced, the global picture shows a near balance between men and women who obtain Bachelor's degrees. The ratio of women to men who get bachelors degrees is 56:48. But, men outstrip women in almost all countries at the doctoral (56%) and researcher (71%) levels (UNESCO 2010).

In terms of progression, organising processes of the academy privilege masculinity (Özbilgin and Healy 2004; Healy et al. 2005; Strachan et al. 2011; Seirstad and Healy 2012) and the typical academic has been conceptualised in terms of the "lonely hero at the top" which reflects hegemonic positioning of males within the academy (Benschop and Brouns 2003). The disadvantages outlined above are reflected in even more stark terms in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa where a male hegemonic society dominates and prevails (Amadi and Amadi 2015) albeit the level of disadvantage for women differs between African countries.

Conceptualising gender disadvantage in the 'African academy'

Although globally women have reached, and in some cases exceeded, parity with men in terms of participation in higher education, they face significant barriers in poorer countries such as many of those located in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2010; World Bank 2012). Women's disadvantage in higher education in Africa is a function of wider gender inequalities in society. However, educational institutions themselves are socialising spaces in which gender is 'done', albeit covertly (Mama 2003) and in which gendered cultural dynamics are produced, internalised, reproduced and reinforced (Barnes 2007). A range of social, cultural and political factors combine to limit girls' and women's participation in education both as learners and teachers (World Bank 2012). Indeed Padavic and Reskin (2000) conceptualise women's disadvantage in terms of a multi-layered, multi-dimensional phenomenon that has at its heart the interlocking structures of gender ideology, employer's actions and workers' preferences.

Africa is clearly way behind the developed world in terms of political and institutional recognition of the disadvantage that women face in organisations (Amadi and Amadi 2015; World Bank 2012). Writers on gender issues in the African academy have highlighted the difficulties that female academics face in raising awareness of gender disadvantage (Tsikata, 2007). As such there is a justified focus on gender issues in higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa in spite of the salience of other strands of inequality in cultural dynamics. Indeed at the intersection of gender and other social and demographic factors such as poverty, ethnicity, social space, disability and age, the chances of being excluded from participation in higher education increase (UNESCO 2010; World Bank 2012). For example in Ghanaian society, seniority and ethnicity are important dimensions through which inequality can be experienced (Aboderin 2004; Apt 1996). As such there is a need for a multi-layered intersectional analysis of women's experiences in the context of a society stratified by age seniority and where age maturity is revered rather than despised (Ogwumike and Aboderin 2005).

An intersectional approach relates to the way in which different strands of disadvantage link together in a complex dynamic to result in a multiple burden. Bradley (2007) delineates the value of using an intersectional approach in terms of three advantages: firstly it avoids the reductionist approach that focuses on a single aspect of disadvantage and enables the unveiling of other forms of oppression; secondly different social dynamics are in operation within any given social interaction; and finally some of the most extreme forms of disadvantage, produced by an intersection of differences, can be seen. Similarly, Healy (2015) points to the importance of an awareness of history, society and biography when we are considering inequality and how the intersection of the varying strands of these can limit individual choice. Such a reminder is imperative when we are considering equality in any context as the impact of cultural traditions dominates societal and workplace practices.

In order to consider the dynamic and complex interrelationship between age, gender, culture and structure we draw primarily upon the work of Evetts (2000) who has developed a framework to explore women's career trajectories through three distinct but inter-related dimensions. Her framework is particularly useful in that it allows us to remove boundaries between culture, structure and action and to recognise the overlapping nature of these. Drawing upon the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Evetts points out that 'structure and culture arise out of actions and actions are influenced by structure and culture' (2000, 64).

In her cultural dimension Evetts's argues that 'cultural belief systems influence and control behaviour by means of common-sense notions of what is "natural" as well as through moral precepts of what is right and appropriate' (2000, 59). Respecting age maturity is a cultural tradition that permeates Ghanaian society. Age groupings are socially constructed and socially determined (Bradley 1996, 1999) with societal pressures placed on individuals to conform to their age 'norm'. Age discrimination, certainly in 'western' cultural contexts, often focuses on the alienation of the more mature worker where 'older' workers can be viewed as no longer adding value to the workplace or indeed society in general. The social construction of age in other cultural contexts, such as those in many Sub-Saharan African countries, is different. Within these contexts, 'older' people are generally seen as providing voices of wisdom; their views are sought and their maturity is respected. Relating back to Healy's (2015) point above, history, society and biography become intertwined within these societies and provide the background to the cultural mosaics in which individuals live and work.

These cultural dimensions overlap and inter-link with the structural dimensions that also help determine career trajectories. The latter she identifies as 'the institutional and organisational forms and patterns in both the family and the work organisation' (2000, 61). She goes on to explain how structural

dimensions include division of both domestic and workplace labour and also 'promotion ladders and career paths'; these structures provide the contextual domain in which men and women – as actors - make their career choices and decisions. This leads us to Evetts's (2000) final dimension, that of action, which she defines as the individual choices and strategies that mediate the impact of culture and structure. The argument here is that people actively strategise in order to develop their careers within environments that have been generated and sustained by the broader cultural and structural influences.

In this chapter, we draw upon these three dimensions in order to consider the multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of women's disadvantage in academia in Ghana. Within a Ghanaian cultural context, where age maturity is revered and the respect of elders is seen as both 'natural' and 'right and appropriate', we ask: 'What is the effect of age (im)maturity on the career and workplace experiences of young men and women?. Further, we consider how, at the intersection of age and gender, combined with patriarchal and culturally defined organisational structures, women face a double disadvantage viz-a-viz the experiences of their male colleagues.

The Research

This chapter draws upon qualitative data gathered for a larger project, which was a comparative exploration of the psychological contract of academics in two higher education institutions, one in the UK and one in Ghana. The data for the project were collected between November 2010 and July 2011 using a mixed methods approach. We initially conducted an on-line survey of two hundred academics from both countries, which provided both quantitative and qualitative data. Following the survey, we undertook a total of forty-three semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviewees were both male and female and drawn from a variety of positions in the universities. Both management (up to and including Deans and Heads of Schools) and staff (including some Teaching Assistants) were represented as well as research-active and non-research active academics. The interviewees were from different age groups and with varying lengths of service. Some participants also kept diarised accounts of their feelings over a three-month period and we also reviewed HR documents at the Ghanaian institution. All the interviews were recorded and fully transcribed.

The research set out to explore the impact of culture, history and change on the psychological contract of academics in a developed (UK) and developing (Ghana) country context. It aimed to uncover both similarities and differences between the psychological contract of academics in these countries with

particular regards to the historical influence, if any, of colonialism in Ghana. In order to do this we explored multi-level issues and expectations with regards to: leadership; communication; trust; security; equity and fairness; career development; culture; trade union engagement; change; collegiality. The qualitative data in particular has provided some rich and valuable insights, including data on the intersectionality of age and gender. For this chapter, we draw upon interviews with twenty-eight Ghanaian male and female academics, all of whom remain anonymous. Their gender, positions and age groups are outlined in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Profile of participants by age and gender

Gender	<30 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60+ years	Total
Male	5	1	7	4	3	20
Female	2	3	0	2	1	8
Total	7	4	7	6	4	28

Table 2 – Profile of participants by position and gender

Gender	Managers	Employees	Total
Male	8	12	20
Female	4	4	8
Total	12	16	28

Table 3 – Profile of participants by rank and gender

Gender	Professor/ Associate Professor	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Assistant Lecturer	Teaching Assistant	Total
Male	8	5	2	0	5	20
Female	2	2	1	2	1	8
Total	10	7	3	2	6	28

National and institutional context

The Western, Anglo-American societal, institutional and organisational context is often viewed as a 'norm' by academics and others when considering areas of employment practices, including issues of equality and diversity. In order to appreciate the complexities of the 'developing economy' / Sub-Saharan Africa context, it is important to begin by outlining the national and institutional contexts within which the research for this study was undertaken.

National context

There are 54 countries in Africa and, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, all of these have a history of colonisation. It is the second most populous continent, with approximately 1.1 billion people. Ghana is situated in West Africa and in 1957 was the first Sub-Saharan country to gain independence from British colonisation. Although characterised by political turmoil in the ensuing decades, Ghana now boasts a relatively stable governmental infrastructure (World Bank 2016). Ghana is rich in natural resources, most notably oil, but still has a high proportion of poverty in some of the more rural areas. With a heterogeneous population of around 25 million there are around 20 ethnolinguistic groups, demonstrating the diversity of the country.

As in many countries, women in Ghana take on more of the domestic caring and household duties (as much as 80% of this), even when they are the sole contributor to the family income (World Bank 2012). In spite of resource challenges, most children attend school and there is a fairly equal balance between boys and girls. However, as in most societies, it is the children from the more affluent families who benefit from higher education, and indeed better non-tertiary education. This often results with them moving outside the country (Europe and the USA) for their further education experiences.

Institutional context

Ghanaian universities were inaugurated following the British model of university, but the resource constraints and demand for student places in Ghana (Abukari and Corner 2010; Tetteh and Ofori 2010) depicts a relatively poorer context for academic work than the UK. With a historical focus on primary and secondary education, African governments have persistently under-funded tertiary institutions (Teferra and Altbach 2004). In their study of the University of Development Studies in Northern Ghana, Abukari and Corner (2010) found resource shortages in some areas of staffing, equipment, buildings and other infrastructure. Since 2005 the quality assurance regime previously applied to polytechnics

and private higher education institutions has been extended to include the public universities (Abukari and Corner 2010) putting further pressure on staff and management. Despite the low proportion of the population who attend university, compared to other West African countries (Abukari and Corner 2010), there has been enormous growth, enrolments increasing by 1,800 per cent over 22 years from 11,867 in 1991/92 (Tetteh and Ofori 2010) to 213,688 in 2013/14 (National Council for Tertiary Education, 2015). Demand far exceeds capacity. Approximately only a third of qualified applicants are admitted to the Ghanaian university system each year (Abukari and Corner 2010; Tetteh and Ofori 2010). This causes motivational pressure on staff to provide education to meet this demand and such high student volumes and workloads may lead to pressures and compromises.

The university in this study is one of over 180 tertiary institutions in the country, including 10 public and 66 private universities (National Accreditation Board 2016) coping with increasing demand for places fuelled by population growth and increasing numbers in primary and secondary education levels (Tetteh and Ofori 2010). At the time there were about 950 full time contracted academic staff in The University, a relatively small number when compared to a student population of over 35,000. It was within this context of a staff-student ratio of about 1:36 that we explored the experiences of young academic staff.

Findings and discussion

Our findings indicate that although gender is a significant factor in the disadvantage faced by women academics at The University, at the intersection of age and gender, based on cultural attitudes, participation and informal expectations and obligations, older women seem to be advantaged in their employment experiences compared to younger women and, to some extent, younger men. Further, there is a convergence in many of the experiences of young women and men.

At the time of data collection there was much re-organising of financial resources and tightening of financial management practices taking place in higher education institutions across the country, including this university. The staff were expected to cut back on financial and other resources, but without this impacting upon the quality of the education provided. In recent times a performance driven culture had been introduced, which was sometimes at variance with the public sector ethos of the staff. The management of The University had embarked upon a more consumer-focussed orientation and there was a very active programme of marketing taking place.

These managerialist policies and practices need to be considered within the global south context of limited government resources. The University was being under-funded and was receiving only 30% of the monies required to sustain it. The reality of this in the workplace context was that staff were overworked and frequently went without pay. High student numbers (around 35,000) meant very high teaching loads with staff teaching between five and six modules per semester. There was a huge lack of physical resources, including IT equipment, books and teaching space. Nonetheless, staff that participated in this research wanted to stay in their jobs and saw academia as a worthy career.

Career progress, however, was based on getting 'tenure', that is a full time permanent position at The University. There was much emphasis on the attainment of doctoral qualifications, for which The University provided funding as part of academic contracts. PhDs from American and European institutions carried higher value and were more favoured as was publishing in European and American academic journals. However, study leave for PhDs and sabbaticals for publishing purposes were usually at the discretion of managers. Many of the staff we spoke to were on temporary contracts, pending their promotion to tenured positions. Although generally given the title of Assistant Lecturer, and paid a commensurate sum for that lower position, they were usually carrying a full academic load. The quid pro quo for working at this 'lowly' position was the opportunity to gain a PhD.

The University reflected the typical structure of an organisation based in a patriarchal society in most countries; the ratio of men to women academics increases as one goes up the organisational hierarchy, as well as the age structure (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4 - University Academic Members by age and gender

Gender	<30 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60+ years	Total
Male	10	133	214	239	118	714
Female	10	72	63	66	22	233
Total	20	205	277	305	140	947

Table 5 - University Academic Members by rank and gender

Gender	Professor	Associate Professor	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Assistant Lecturer	Total
Male	70	97	162	360	25	714
Female	8	22	55	123	25	233
Total	78	119	217	483	50	947

Regardless of the historical reasons for the more recent participation of women in higher education, these structures set the scene for higher numbers of women to experience disadvantage in the organisation compared to men, based on the fact of the intersection of gender and age. In Ghana, where age immaturity is undervalued, being younger in age and lower down in the organisational hierarchy compounds disadvantage.

Controlling notions of femininity and youth

Internationally, the higher levels of the academic hierarchy are male dominated, and the academic culture to be such that 'maleness' is valued. In African academic institutions, the colonial antecedents of gender attitudes have often remained and been emulated. Interlocked with these already entrenched institutional structures is the cultural convention of deferring to age.

One issue that the young academics, both female and male, identified was how they sometimes struggled to gain credibility as academics with students. The 'mature man' was the stereotypical 'professor':

> There are certain statements they [students] can't make to an elderly person but they would do that to a young person like me (*Male teaching assistant – 20-29 years*)

> If you tell [MBA] students to study there are times they take offence, just because of who you are. This "young" [woman], to tell an elderly person who manages his business to study! But the Head of Department says things and because he is elderly and a man all of them will listen to it *(Female assistant lecturer – 20-29 years)*

In an organisational environment characterised by performance management practices, student feedback was an unofficial, but nonetheless recognised, mechanism of asserting pressure on staff, particularly with regards to career development. In order to progress within The University system of tenure, teaching staff needed to demonstrate their ability to generate a positive learning environment. For some staff cultural norms and behaviours, outside their control, impacted upon their ability to facilitate the desired learning environment:

> The Ghanaian culture is sometimes...you would not be able to put a finger on it sometimes, but we know it. So even with your interaction with students, especially the older ones... For instance I was just accused last week of talking to them like kids - these are managers and executives on the [MBA] programme. It was the Vice Dean who drew my attention to it. This is a typical Ghanaian situation. It is a culture situation. These are persons who probably see me and think they are older than me, and I am telling them "no". They can't fit themselves into it [and] that is the most current issue I am trying to figure out, how do I manage it? So the Ghanaian culture

seriously influences relationships with students and with colleagues *(Female assistant lecturer –*
20-29 years)

There is a complexity here for this woman who is rooted in a culture that she recognises and respects, but one which frustrates her ability to perform her academic work. Her own educational achievement is diminished and delegitimised when it is linked to her personal profile of 'young woman'. The 'institutional and organisational forms and patterns' (Evetts 2000, 61) within which she is being evaluated, are such that they privilege the more mature, male, academic.

It is not only with students that younger members of staff have to gain credibility, they also have to do so with their peers and the age issue is further exacerbated when it comes to taking on the position of line manager. Age seniority impacts managerial practices to the extent that cultural and corporatist practices become entwined and it is difficult to extrapolate one from the other, as these two male managers explain:

> In one of the departments, should I say two departments, most of the Senior Members … taught the Head of Departments (HoDs)...they [HoDs] were their students and sometimes the Heads...they find it very difficult to manage the department because of them...because of their egos and things like that. It is a problem. It's that Ghanaian problem *(Male manager - 40-49 years)*

An interesting incident occurred during the interview that produced the quote below. This young academic manager had called an important departmental meeting and left instructions with administrative staff not to allow the booking of any rooms for other meetings during that time slot. This was to ensure that all staff attended the meeting. While we were speaking to him and he was relaying this information to us (as an indication of his authority), an older academic walked into his office and demanded to know why he had been denied a room for a meeting at the same time. Our interviewee made an initial attempt at 'pulling rank', however, when his colleague challenged his managerial authority, he capitulated and agreed that the colleague could come to the departmental meeting later. Even so, after the colleague had left he was very concerned about how the interaction would be perceived by this older academic:

> For instance this man is older than me, he taught me so he expects that when he does something – [because] in our culture, an elderly man is usually right, yes? and you can't talk to him in a certain way. I am sure he will later come back to me and say I didn't talk to him well...why do I question what he's doing and all that? It is in our system. It pervades our system...It's like the young one hasn't got any sense. So the culture plays a heavy role in managing because in decision making you are there but your contribution to the decision-making is low...it's low *(Male manager - 40-49 years)*

In a patriarchal society and an institutional context where seniority is the domain of men (Tsikata 2007), the impact of such cultural values and norms are intensified for younger women taking up managerial positions. Having broken through a 'glass ceiling' to progress to managerial level, the female manager talks of the frustrations of returning to a culture that she simultaneously respects and finds exasperating:

> I had a conflict at first with one of the [male, older] staff members where - [my] expectations were too high; I was expecting something to be done by a certain time and it did not happen. So there was some confrontation. Then…it came to the attention of the Dean. And the Dean was trying to explain to me that people do things differently, that it is possible that this person sees you in a certain light - you know [me] younger, female (laughter) …. I am [Ghanaian], but I spent a lot of years outside Ghana. I spent too many years outside Ghana. I have been accused of not behaving like a Ghanaian. I have been accused of that but sometimes I have to remember the context (*Female manager – 30-39 years*)

This quote highlights a two-pronged tension: Firstly a tension within herself and secondly, between her own notions of managerial authority and that of her colleagues and her manager. In the first, her identity as a Ghanaian woman and a 'western' academic is brought into stark relief. Whilst she appreciates the former she regrets the loss of the latter. Moving back to Ghana has emphasised the cultural and structural constraints that she had moved away from. The second paradox is reflected in the friction between her on the one hand, and her colleague and her manager on the other. She sees management from a 'western' perspective, where authority is vested in the 'office' irrespective of age, yet her colleague and manager expect her to conform to Ghanaian standards of respect for age and seniority, regardless of 'office'. This conflict is so severe that it leads to the internal and external questioning of her identity as a Ghanaian.

Although she is clearly aware that her actions are limited by cultural influences, this woman does not appear to challenge these but is resigned to them. She has 'returned' to societal values that constrain her actions but she also respects these as the underlying context of her home country. This is understandable, but nonetheless, in doing so, she is perpetuating the privileging of age maturity within her organisational environment, a context that young women following her will also have to deal with.

Academic freedom and societal culture

Academic spaces do not sit in isolation from the societies in which they are embedded. Indeed as Mama (2003) has argued, apart from reflecting the societal culture the academy also actively produces and reinforces societal notions of gender. In fulfilling their duties with the commitment that would

otherwise be seen as normal in an older man, some young female academics felt that their dedication was seen as "over stepping their boundaries" – confirming Tsikata's (2007) suggestion that in the culture of the Ghanaian academy real academics are apparently male, and in this case, older men. Young women's hard work was viewed with suspicion, and they were perceived as having ulterior motives. Further, the next narrative demonstrates how the coping mechanisms of an overloaded young unmarried woman can be misconstrued in the context of a culture that devalues youth and women:

> The kind of suspicion people could have here…if they find a young woman busily doing work they assume because you are a woman - and they think that is not supposed to be done by you - you are doing a lot more just to rub shoulders with your *older* male counterparts which is not so! There are times it is just the love of the job and the fact that yes, maybe you have to do a lot more than others who have been in the field for all these years *(Female assistant lecturer - 20-29 years).*

Compounded with single marital status, the triple intersection of these strands in the life of young, single female lecturers can exacerbate their already difficult work lives as junior academics:

> If they look at an elderly person they wouldn't say these things but just because of the age and the sex and they look at you as a woman and the fact that you don't even...they can't see any ring so they think all of those things means you are quite 'small' *(Female lecturer – 30-39 years)*

Despite the fact that hard work is necessary in order to progress in their careers, these women are caught in a culture-structure-action trap. The mature male societal and institutional culture dominates the organisational structures, which asks for long hours and commitment, but if a young woman attempts to follow this 'norm' then her actions are dismissed and derided by those helping to perpetuate the norm. If the women above, and their female colleagues, do not work hard they will not progress but if they follow what is seen as a typical male career path then they are seen as acting in a way that is contrary to the notions of their society. In Ghana where age immaturity is under valued, being younger in age and lower down in the organisational hierarchy this compounds disadvantage. Indeed this is reflected in the narratives below where we explore voice and workload.

Silencing young voices

Millward et al. (2000) define employee voice as the enabling of employees to influence employer actions and Calveley et al. (2014) argue that such voice is vital in maintaining a balance within the employment relationship. Our findings show that in Ghana, both young male and young female staff felt that they had limited voice in the organisation. The culture of respect for one's elders effectively silences younger workers and bars them from the decision-making process. It was clear in the participants' narratives that age was the overriding factor in their experience, as opposed to gender:

> Because we are young, we cannot challenge lecturers and we cannot make our concerns known. Challenging the lecturers is understood in terms of a personal challenge of the lecturer's ability rather than an intellectual debate *(Male teaching assistant – 20-29 years)*

> As a young person we are not consulted on any issues regarding work or work conditions *(Female teaching assistant – 20-29 years)*

These young academics are having their views obstructed by cultural belief systems, which are embodied within the organisational processes and practices. Of course, these practices work to the benefit of the more mature faculty, who no doubt went through the same processes themselves, but who are able to avoid confrontation with their younger colleagues. In the light of Robinson and Rousseau's (1994) findings that suggest that perceptions of psychological contract breach are prevalent among highly skilled new entrants into organisations, the lack of input into decision-making or the lack of opportunity to articulate grievances among this group can pose a challenge to The University. Interestingly, although there is demand for academic staff in Ghana, exit was not considered as being a solution to this situation, perhaps because these young people are aware that this deeply embedded culture is likely to persist wherever they go to work.

Workload - Expectations and obligations

High teaching workloads, which is a problem across many universities was a recurring theme for all, but particularly so for the younger faculty:

> There are people who are on retirement contracts who don't want to do much at all and the younger faculty who need time and space to do their research and so on, actually find themselves teaching the larger classes, the classes that have a thousand students and that kind of thing, so I think the workload is a huge challenge (*Female manager - 40-49 years*)

Some staff identified this to be a form of discrimination and linked it to the intersection of gender and age:

> Discrimination working here...there are certain things you won't be asked to do because maybe you are a woman and you are young (*Female assistant lecturer - 20-29 years*)

Further, there were expectations that younger and newer staff would take on more than their share of the workload in exchange for funding for staff development despite the latter being their entitlement. In the next narrative managers used their power, both as people in authority but also as older members of the faculty, to 'force' younger members to take on extra workload, on the threat of withdrawing funding for a PhD:

> [He] complained that he had been given too many courses to teach and we said "we all know that you are going to leave and do your PhD. Who do you think is going to teach your courses while you are away? So you've got to carry the load now and then while you're away, somebody else carries the load." Then within three months after the allocations had been made he came and put his papers down that he had got a school and that I should sign his papers to release him and I looked at him and I said "I am not signing" *(Male manager – 40-49 years)*

Both male and female managers wielded this power. The experiences of the staff emerged through the interaction of managerial discretion and workplace ageism, in which a line manager operates with strong notions of what sort of reciprocal obligations will be exacted from younger staff in exchange for staff development. As the staff members referred to in the narratives above and below did not conform with their line managers' perceptions of the workplace conduct of a younger subordinate, this led to threatening behaviour by the managers:

> I mentioned to them that the fact that you are due to go for PhD studies doesn't mean that you should go right away; what if you come back and there is no department to come back to because it's collapsed? So you have to sacrifice. I have asked them to sacrifice so I suppose …that's why…my voice is very unpopular *(Female manager – 30-39 years)*

For the younger women, the workload issue was double edged. Some of these women were juggling work and family commitments, again, a usual phenomenon for female workers and not unique to Ghana. Many of the women were either young parents or considering becoming parents. This caused extra anxiety and sometimes resulted in taking on the responsibility for the whole of their gender, as demonstrated in this quote:

> For the workload, [there was] the time I had to do the five courses...one of my colleagues went on maternity leave just at the time we entered. I felt if the person goes on maternity leave and they had to get a part-timer to come and take the person's place, in the near future maybe the department could think if they would have lots of young people…child bearing [age] and those things could interfere with their work. Maybe they'd decide not to pick a lot more very young people and maybe pick the elderly and we think it wouldn't be good. We thought it wouldn't be good so I decided to stand in for the person and that was what I did (Female assistant lecturer - 20-29 years)

Although this quote seems to reflect concern with the experiences of young people in the department in general, in particular it reveals the greater burden that young women face at the intersection of gender, age and seniority. What it also reveals is the potential for underlying tensions to develop between young women and young men; tensions that undermine their ability to portray a united front to challenge some of the inequalities they face. Evetts (2000) argues that actors who find themselves in structural and cultural constraints utilise their own agency to navigate their career paths and experiences, in order to mediate the impact of culture and structure. This means that it was important

for the academics to develop coping and resistance strategies to steer their way through the constraints they encountered; however, they did so with varying success.

Negotiation, adaptation and confrontation

The young academics we spoke to found ways of adapting themselves and their lifestyles to cope with the extra pressures they were under but this was sometimes to the detriment of career progress:

> I didn't find a good structure to balance teaching and research so it became teaching, teaching, teaching … and now I am trying to see some line [*colloquialism, meaning a way through*] to apportion some time to each [teaching and research] but teaching gets heavier and heavier as programmes get introduced (Female assistant lecturer - 20-29 years)

Given The University's insistence on the acquisition of a PhD and/or publications as a condition of tenure, time to do research, or indeed engage in scholarly activity was clearly important. However these adaptation strategies seem to lead to extra workload, which undermined staff intentions and ability to progress their careers. Several younger staff we spoke to had put their doctoral intentions on hold in order to maintain and cope with existing workloads. Clearly this would be exacerbated in the lives of women with young families who carried a double burden of both domestic and work responsibilities as demonstrated by one young female academic who decided to confront her manager with the problem and seek his advice. Unfortunately, the advice that was given to them was stereotypically male:

> I have talked to the head of department under whom I was hired and he is trying to give me a sense of what he does. He is a male so when he tells me some of the things [that] work for him it doesn't seem to be working for me like: "Work long hours". Who would pick up my kids? Who would take care of them at home? After school yes, and then working at home then what would happen to the kids? *(Female assistant lecturer - 30-39 years)*

This advice might be appropriate for the younger men trying to progress their careers, but less so for women. In a traditional society like Ghana, where a woman's caring responsibilities include husbands, children, elderly parents or parents-in-law, being advised to work even longer hours is almost dismissive of the issue. For young parents like this woman, the intensity of her work-life conflict is deepened by her manager's ambivalence. The need to be professional and the pressure form family and friends to be a 'good' mother and/or wife can intensify the guilt associated with a perceived inability to balance work and life. The irony of the manager's response is that academia has historically portrayed itself as an egalitarian liberal space where knowledge is created and equality is valued - as such, a safe space for women.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered how the focus on gender alone in research on the African university tells a partial story of the workplace discrimination faced by women. Within the complex Sub-Saharan context of Ghana, in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of policies, processes and practices it is necessary to take a deeper and broader, multilevel view. In order to do this, we drew upon Evetts's (2000) use of culture, structure and action dimensions to develop a conceptual framework, which helps us to explore the academic career paths of young women and men.

From our empirical research, we identified how the ability of younger academics to manage their work and careers is influenced by cultural notions of youth. In a society that reveres age maturity and correlates this with seniority and respect, it is difficult for young people to find a voice. This is not just the case for the more 'junior' academics, nor is it the case for women only. Both men and women who are appointed to managerial positions are faced with resistance by more mature colleagues who see age as a license to act independently, and they have to navigate a path which treads a fine line between managerial authority and disrespect. For women, employed within institutions heavily influenced by a patriarchal culture, at the intersection of femininity and youth they are faced with a double disadvantage, this often being exacerbated by their more junior position in the academic hierarchy. With managers holding all the cards viz-a-viz career progression, it is often the case that young academics are doubly taken advantage of. Firstly by the exploitative management practices which extract high volumes of work from them; and secondly by themselves as they see the ultimate goal of tenure and career development as being worth the sacrifice of long hours and low pay.

As the cultural and structural processes that shape the young women's and men's experiences with respect to work interactions are embedded in the practices of the society and institution, they become resilient and are therefore reproduced over time. Of course, as Evetts (2000) suggests, these young academics have agency and are able to strategise in order to develop their careers, but for them, the notion of privilege following age maturity is 'natural' and is 'right and appropriate' (Evetts 2000, 59). Nonetheless, the more these cultural and institutional norms are adhered to, the more they persist. This does not bode well for young Ghanaian academics of the future.

Our research found that there was frustration amongst the young academics, both male and female, as they struggled to carve out a place for themselves within the academy. It also identified how in such a patriarchal society young women, at the intersection of age and gender, found this more difficult on three fronts. Firstly, women - as women - are viewed as having less power, both as tutors (by students) and managers (by colleagues). Secondly, their youth delegitimises their authority in the classroom and

in the academic community. Finally, they are expected to take on the undervalued responsibilities of home-related caring, which compounds the struggle to achieve the respect and recognition in the academic community. Indeed managers failed, or perhaps refused, to see that this was a societal issue that inhibited the progression of young women in the workplace. To get on in academia in Ghana, it would appear that one has to be willing to follow the mature male cultural 'norm' regardless of your gender or age.

As Healy (2015) reminds us, it is important to have an awareness of how history, society and biography intersect when considering diversity, whilst Evetts (2000) points out how people's behaviour is influenced and even controlled by cultural belief systems. Our research has demonstrated that in Ghanaian society characterised by a deep reverence towards age maturity, to pay respect, honour and give privilege to elders is a time-honoured convention. These attitudes are so embedded within workplaces that not to act in this way would almost be deemed as deviant behaviour. This intersection of cultural beliefs and attitudes impacts the approach taken to age and gender in the workplace, even in the 'enlightened' sphere of academia.

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