



NAMHE
National Association
for Music in Higher Education

Gender and Equality in Music Higher Education

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Contents:

1	Introduction	3
2	Methodology, sample and key questions	4
3	Themes, issues and findings	5
3.1	Does gender matter and do 'we' have a problem?	5
3.2	Gender and higher education (HE)	6
3.3	Types of gendering	7
3.3.1	<i>Academic disciplines, subject specialisms and gender</i>	7
3.3.2	<i>Gendering of instruments</i>	10
3.3.3	<i>Gendering of academic and support roles</i>	10
3.3.4	<i>Gendering of students</i>	12
3.4	Practical, ideological and cultural obstacles faced by women	13
3.4.1	<i>Starting a family</i>	14
3.4.2	<i>Masculine working practices</i>	15
3.4.3	<i>Lack of female role models</i>	15
3.5	Transgender	16
4	Examples of good practice and recommendations	17
5	Conclusion	18
6	References	20

1 Introduction

This report has been developed from a programme of research commissioned by NAMHE, examining gender issues in Music HE departments, schools and institutions, and in preparation for the launch of the Equality Challenge Unit's Gender Equality Charter Mark (GEM) scheme, which is to merge with the Athena SWAN Charter in April 2015. The Athena SWAN Charter was established to address gender inequalities and imbalances among academic staff in science-related subjects. It was launched in 2005, with the first awards conferred in 2006, and has since grown to 114 members holding different levels of awards at institutional and departmental levels. There are currently three levels of awards – bronze, silver and gold – each signifying a different level of commitment and practice of addressing gender imbalances for academic staff:

“**A bronze** institutional award recognises a solid foundation for eliminating discrimination and developing an inclusive culture that values all staff... **A silver** institutional award recognises a significant record of activity and achievement by the institution in promoting equality and in addressing challenges across the whole institution... **gold** applications will have significant evidence that the institutional culture has undergone long term change and progress has been made against the principles of the charter.”
(<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charter-marks/charter-marks-explained/>)

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) provides advice, guidance and resources for institutions seeking advancements and improvements in equality and diversity, through evidence-based self-assessment and peer-review processes. Alongside the Athena SWAN Charter and Gender Equality Charter Mark schemes, it is running a number of associated equality challenge programmes, such as the Race Equality Charter Mark pilot with 26 higher education institutions who will be able to apply for an award in Spring 2015.

The Gender Equality Charter Mark (GEM) aims to address gender inequalities and imbalance in the arts, humanities and social sciences, in particular the underrepresentation of women in senior roles. Although it was closely modelled on the principles of Athena SWAN charter, it expanded them to include:

- Professional and support staff
- Academic staff
- Transgender staff
- Men as well as women
- The progression of students into academia

The ECU decided not to consider sexual orientation as part of the GEM award scheme.

An *Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report* published in 2013 found that 53.8% of staff working in UK higher-education institutions in 2011/12 were women, of whom 62.3% were employed in professional and support roles, while the majority of academic staff were male (55.5%).

However, women comprised the majority of part-time staff overall, making up 78.5% of part-time professional and support staff and 54.9% of part-time academic staff. Men composed 61% of full-time academic staff and 53.1% of full-time staff overall.

Gender imbalance in senior roles is particularly startling:

“The majority of professors were male (79.5%). This was true across part- and full-time staff and within SET and non-SET areas. The gender difference was most prominently observed in full-time professorial roles in SET, where men comprised 84.0% of staff.” (*Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report*, 2013: 75-76)

This was also reflected in the salary gap, where 69.3% of academic staff (72% of full-time, 57.4% of part-time) earning over £50,000 were men.

“The proportion of male academic staff earning over £50,000 was nearly double that of female academic staff (32.8% compared with 18.1%).” (p. 82)

2 Methodology, sample and key questions

In contrast to the statistical detail provided above, the work undertaken on behalf on NAMHE was qualitative, comprising formal focus-group discussions and interviews, as well as less structured conversations and correspondence with colleagues working in HE music departments, schools and institutions.

Five focus-group discussions with 23 participants based within departments or schools have taken place in English, Welsh and Scottish HE institutions, including one conservatoire. Nineteen participants were members of academic staff, while the remaining four were employed in either a professional or a support capacity. Eleven focus-group participants were male, and twelve were female. The two one-to-one interviewees were both female. All conversations have been recorded, transcribed and anonymised by abbreviating the gender of each participant to UM (unidentified male) and UF (unidentified female). The majority of the participants were familiar with or have had an experience of non-academic musical contexts and roles, such as the music industries and performance, thus were able to provide cross-contextual perspectives.

The research rationale was informed by an understanding of the measurable and published impact of Athena SWAN awards on equality and diversity within award-holding institutions (Hawkes, 2011). While the research was envisaged as an exploration of gender issues within particular musical settings, as well as the qualitative data-gathering ‘exercise’, in order to map out the existing gender-equality

issues and thus provide some recommendations, it also proved to be an “intervention” in itself: the mere participation in focus-group discussion provided a platform for recognising and verbalising gender inequalities in each setting, as well as for discussion of possible ways of addressing these inequalities. The latter is an important point that will be addressed further in the discussion of the findings.

The focus-group discussions were guided by the following broad themes:

- Gender equality in Higher Education/Higher Education Music/particular institution/specific academic unit
- Gendering of disciplines and subjects
- Practical and ideological obstacles faced by men and women within each setting
- Examples of good and bad practice affecting gender equality
- The student body, gendering of role models and gendering of the syllabus
- Professional and support staff experiences
- Strategies for tackling unequal representation of men and women in music-related subject areas

It is important to note that the participants were bound by their academic, professional and creative involvement in music in its broadest sense, while acknowledging that the cultural specificities of each institutional setting, as well as personal narratives and experiences played an integral part in the discussions that have taken place.

3 Themes, issues and findings

3.1 Does gender matter and do “we” have a problem?

“Our universities are highly sexist institutions. Women are outnumbered and relegated to junior posts. More than 60% of academics are men, and about 80% are professors. Official statistics show that more women are on temporary contracts than men. Behind the numbers lie depressing examples of everyday sexism”. (Todd, 2015:1)

All five focus groups were unanimous in their perception of the importance of gender in Higher Education, as well as within Music specifically. Having experience of both academic and non-academic contexts, the participants were aware of deep-seated gendering of roles and practices within every aspect of music production, musical ‘texts’ and music consumption (audiences) – i.e. within musical cultures as a whole. They were able to reflect and comment on gender imbalance within their own working environments and that of the student population. For example, a female member of academic staff informed me that although she did not engage with gender as an academic topic, she had undertaken an informal count of men and women in the UK’s music schools and departments:

UF3: It was unofficial, it was just me looking at it. I did publish it online in a blog though, and I had many comments about it.

A male participant commented on gender imbalance in the music industry:

UM1...the popular music business...certainly recording engineers and producers...it has become quite male dominated. I mean there are some well-known female sound engineers and producers but overall they tend to be male.

A number of participants reflected on gender imbalance in the student population, associated with student pathways and progression. For example:

UM2: In our subject we are relatively fortunate that on a graduate level it seems to be 50-50...but if you go to Masters level already I think it begins to shift, at PhD level it is quite stark and at every step of the way it gets a little bit more extreme, more wider.

While relevant, gender equality was perceived overall as a part of other 'equalities' that ought to be addressed, such as the need to increase representation of black and ethnic minorities in all roles, as well as greater access for staff and students with disabilities.

UM1: Yes, I do have an interest in equality of all kinds actually...I think gender is one of the most important ones but there are plenty of others.

3.2 Gender and higher education (HE)

The conversations within the focus groups frequently addressed gender equality in HE. As many participants had experienced working in a number of different HE institutions they were able to offer cross-comparisons of working cultures. The overall perception was that while education as a sector has "good intentions", the reality in terms of gender equality is that it is a highly hierarchical, male-dominated environment. Here a male participant comments on the process of short-listing of candidates and the interview process:

UM1: Well I think it's partly to do with short listing and then the interview part. I think those two things tend to be dominated by men, and older men...

Similarly, a female participant remarked:

UF3: If the hiring committees are largely male, maybe that is the problem...

Furthermore, women have been perceived as not feeling entitlement or not having the confidence to apply for certain positions:

UF2: ...it's just a matter of having the confidence to think that they could be head of school or a senior lecturer. I think that's the problem.

Having established that gender equality within HE and specific music contexts ought to be addressed, the discussions of groups tended to focus on the cultural specificity of their immediate working environments, that is, local cultures that were often perceived as supportive and collegial, while sharply contrasted with the institutional culture associated with hierarchies and top-down working practices. This issue surfaced in all of the five focus groups. Here is an excerpt from the discussion amongst participants at a university in the south of England:

UM2: Well this university has become more hierarchical I think over the last few years. There is a lot of managerialism...I think it is a really bad thing...there's a lot more of being told what you have to do.

UF1: It is like top down not bottom up, definitely.

UM2: Not listening.

UM1. People on the ground, lecturers usually, have got to try and then make it work and quite often there are some ludicrous things that come down to you.

Similarly, a discussion amongst some Scottish participants about the way in which power operates within an institution could be summed up by the following statement:

UM1: Okay, I think this institution is compartmentalised. There are bubbles over there with which I have little interaction. And there is another bubble over here and there is another one over here. And power is flowing in all sorts of directions but a lot of it sits up there in the bubble I have very little to do with. And so in that sense I'm more comfortable not speaking out, so it feels pretty hierarchical to me.

Reflecting on senior roles associated with power, one participant in a Welsh institution noted:

UM1: It seems to me that within HE the good intentions are pretty much universal, but the reality of the situation is different. And a lot of that is...so deeply encoded that you can't really see it. We have in this institution a vice-chancellor who is male, four pro vice-chancellors - one for teaching and learning who is male, one for research who is male, one for Welsh affairs who is male, and one for the student experience who is female.

The institutional ethos is of significance here, as research associated with the Athena SWAN awards and their impact has found that there has to be a meaningful commitment and support at institutional level in order for the academic units to engage with the process, set out goals and achieve greater gender balance and improve gender equality in science subjects.

3.3 Types of gendering

3.3.1 Academic disciplines, subject specialisms and gender

The theme of gender and genre has been attracting a great deal of attention within discourses of popular music (e.g. masculine rock and feminine pop) as well as classical, where there is a long-standing perception that classical music in particular suffers from masculinisation both in terms of the content produced (e.g. the compositions written in past centuries by men) and current gendering practices that exclude or marginalise women. The focus-group discussions tended to support such perceptions by incorporating an examination of gendering of academic disciplines and subject specialisms, as well as their associated practices.

UM2: I teach a class in 19th-century music and that includes a lot on gender because I think that area is traditionally so male dominated, I think we need some kind of correction...so my primary area is classical contemporary music and my secondary is jazz, and both are extremely male dominated in ways which I find personally very troubling.

UM3: I think there is one period I work in where the gender issue balance seems much healthier, and it is quite striking, it is in traditional music of Scotland.

UF2: Most people who work, who practice in the field of music and health are females, while those who have written books and have done lot of research in the field are men actually.

Additionally, conducting and composition are the two areas that have been identified as masculine domains by all focus groups. However, providing a rationale for their apparent masculinisation was a challenging task. Here is a male participant discussing conducting, which is perceived as a highly masculine activity and pursuit:

Interviewer: What does it take for a woman to train as a conductor?

UM1: Well the training is technically the same, not that I'm trained in the slightest, because most conductors are really amateurs, or have done something else. And you know, there's no actual skill to conducting, or very little, in terms of actual technique like playing an instrument...the players and or singers have often been brought up to expect a male, and males have often expected to lead. In other words it's a self-reinforcing culture.

The notion of “a self-reinforcing culture” is particularly pertinent where an attempt is to be made in challenging gender imbalance. According to the ECU report *Measuring Success* (2011), cultural change features as one of the three key impacts of the Charter, alongside increased representation of women and formalising and focusing gender-equality related activities.

While acknowledging a positive change in terms of gender balance within music composition, it was felt that this area too remains strongly male dominated:

UF2: Often you still get concerts in new music where it's exclusively male performers on the programme. It also very much depends on the type of music...on the field...certainly when you have music with technology, which is my field, it is almost exclusively male, so there are very few female composers who work with live electronics or anything like that, you know it's still highly gendered. And if you go to conferences, it's very much male dominated as well.

The last quotation brings up a theme that emerged very prominently in the focus-group discussions – music technology and gender. It forms a part of a broader discourse of technologies, gender and power where the relationship between women and technologies is examined and contested. Bayton (1998:41) examines an uneasy relationship between women and technology, which “is itself interwoven with masculinity”. In her discussion of the persistent associations between rock music and masculinities, she explores the gendering of music technologies alongside other gendered perceptions, such as that between physical and mental strength, physical power and playing of an instrument. A more affirming argument is put forward by theorist Sadie Plant, who was interested in and examined a long-standing relationship between women and technologies. Plant perceives histories of women's liberation and technology as “woven together”, where by establishing their own networks bounded and informed by technologies, women begin to represent a threat to patriarchal order (Plant, 1995: 46).

Here is a female lecturer describing the pressures she feels while working in a mostly male environment – “an aggressive environment”:

UF1: When I stand to deliver a computer composition lecture I feel that I absolutely must not make a mistake. The 18-year-old mostly male students may just be unforgiving of a female music technology lecturer...similarly I feel pressure to give confidence to the female students, that this woman knows her stuff – a strong role model.

A similar account is given by another female lecturer who shifted her focus from her conservatoire training to music technology:

UF2: ...my background is in classical music and to begin with I studied piano, and studied composition and went to a conservatoire and I didn't feel like there was any aspect of limitation to do with my gender...And it wasn't until I shifted my focus to music technology that I felt it very strongly...It felt like a lad's club and I was a novelty and it felt like sometimes people didn't trust me or that I knew what I was talking about.

A female lecturer describes her attempt of introducing feminist musicology into her teaching:

UF3: It was always hilarious when I tried to teach anything to do with feminist musicology...the anger, the venting of spleens that went on was quite extraordinary...you'd have a class of about 120 music technology students of which a very small number were females. And they just wouldn't say anything, they'd just sit there tight lipped not saying a word while the boys in the class went 'oh she's just a miserable old bitch, she doesn't know what she's talking about'.

Reflecting on the field of electro-acoustic music and the composers involved, a female lecturer remarked:

UF3: You know again and again in different parts of the world you see the same people...for some reason I am in this kind of group of people, it's the same people all the time, they're all men.

Where involved with technology, women have been ascribed with certain characteristics and stereotyped:

UF2: And you know the person doing live sound, if it's a woman she is probably a lesbian...the females that they see in the industry who are behind the scenes doing tech things are generally kind of masculine, they're kind of there with their toolkit and their jeans and their sneakers and they're not feminine.

All of the above accounts foreground the pressure women feel when working in a masculine discipline or male-dominated environments; the lack of trust they experience alongside the need to constantly prove themselves. This is often contrasted by the narratives of working in all-female or more gender-neutral environments, where a greater degree of support, collegiality and trust is experienced.

3.3.2 *Gendering of instruments*

The gendering of instruments emerged as another prominent theme amongst all of the focus-group participants. While acknowledging that “things are changing”, the change has been perceived as gradual and incremental, so that an impact within the HE environment is yet to be felt.

UF2: I think traditionally you had a situation where boys were encouraged to play brass instruments and girls were encouraged to play flute. So there still hasn't been enough time for that to work out of the system...

UM1: You know, you would see an old picture of an orchestra from 1920 all men, but two female harpists.

UF2: I've never met a male harpist.

UM1: I've seen one once but, yes...

While a complex and multifaceted subject, the gendering of instruments has an immediate impact on gendering of the academic and pastoral roles, resulting in a clear lack of female role models in many areas of music education, which in turn plays a part in choices students make, often resulting in perpetuation of the established gendered musical pathways.

UM1. There were no female members of staff until just recently when a female member of staff was appointed for jazz voice. Which is the second study. The principal study jazz department is entirely men.

The theme of having to prove oneself by entering an exclusive “club” and adapting masculine modes of working and performance also came through in the conversations about the gendering of instruments:

UF1: There were 16 other trumpet players who were all male so I was constantly taunted for three years that I was the only female. Then I proved myself by getting the first position in every seat...it was deemed to be a sign of respect to say I played like a bloke.

3.3.3 *Gendering of academic and support roles*

The qualitative work undertaken confirmed the statistics outlined in the Introduction, where there seems to be a threefold gendering occurring within HE broadly and Music specifically: first, between male academics and female support staff; second, within academic roles between what is perceived as masculine research and feminine teaching and learning; and third, between senior male and junior female roles. The two female focus-group participants from a Scottish institution I visited were both music graduates who found themselves in supporting rather than academic roles following their graduation. This trend was confirmed in my conversation with the participants of another Scottish institution:

UF2: Well I have to say there is still a tradition of, well...do you still call secretaries secretaries? I do not know, they tend to have different names these days but they are all female. The support, the lower down the scale, the support staff are more or less female.

In contrast, academic roles and research in particular have been perceived and described as “masculine, obsessive and borderline autistic” pursuits that do not necessarily suit female working practices.

UM3: I guess one of the teaching and learning things might be sort of pastoral world, it might be associated with women which might not be there with men...the kind of model of a researcher tends to be the lone researcher getting out there and doing it.

Furthermore, the example below illustrates very well the gender gap associated with the hierarchy of an institution:

UM2: I remember being here and the cleaners have just won an award so there was a picture of all cleaners...so you look at the picture of all the cleaners who won an award and it was all women and then you look at the senior management group and it is all men...but I would say there have been incremental improvements with one or two women getting included in senior management.

When women do achieve a level of seniority they are still often made to feel inadequate or apologetic:

UF1: But I just feel you've got to justify your position and your authority and justify your skills every single meeting...yes I do know what I'm talking about...I'm not stupid.

Culturally persistent associations about gendered roles in Academia are well illustrated by the following reminiscence about travelling to a job interview:

UF2: ...on the day I arrived for my interview here I caught a taxi and he said “what are you doing?” and I said “I'm going for a job interview” and he said “oh, you are going to be a secretary?” and I said “no, I am applying to be a lecturer”. “Oh what, in nursing?” he said. It just kept getting worse and it's not just the subject area, it's a cultural thing I think.

The gendering of roles within an educational setting plays a significant part in the overall student experience, as well as in student pathways. There has been a perception that students benefit from being taught by staff of both genders, both in terms of opening up a space for collaboration and creativity and the pursuit of their own creative or academic goals, which would be narrower had they only been taught by one gender. Some practical, gender-specific issues have also been identified:

UF1: I feel that any female teacher that I've had...I feel like I had a better connection with them because I can empathise with them, I mean...they've spoken to me about episodes when they have been in professional work in orchestras...that have happened regarding equality. And there's just some physical things about the instrument that you...that men didn't know about or that men did not experience...

The evidence here is anecdotal and further research involving the student population would be needed in order to confirm such perceptions.

The lack of female role models in some musical subjects, as well as the lack of female role models in senior academic positions, has been identified as a particular issue by the participants engaged in this piece of research. Both as students and as academics women feel in the minority and thus feel they have to adapt to the

working modes of men, who are in the majority. On several occasions the “syndrome” of “the only female in the department” has been discussed. There has been an interesting variety of experiences of being the only female in an academic unit, from feeling privileged and special, to being overwhelmed by an aggressive masculine culture, anxious, not listened to and not heard.

UF3: I quite enjoyed being the only woman in a way...it made me feel quite a bit different... but also was very glad when were joined by x (another woman)...

UF3: ...you know when you go into our school management meetings...and often I'll be one of two women there...

UF2: Being one of just two women...the main issue that I experience with that is confidence. I think as a rule men find it easier to speak out and to speak confidently, and I don't...and it is something I'm trying to work on...

From a different focus group:

Interviewer: How did you feel when you joined, knowing you are going to be the only female?

UF3: I didn't realise it to be honest, I mean I didn't consciously think about it. And it struck me at open days when we line up in front of prospective students and then it's really embarrassing.

Another conversation:

UF1: I think it is the communication and vocabulary, isn't it? A lot of managers talk about having strong vocabulary and the strong seems to be connected very much with masculine notions, you know, traditional notions. And you think “well, what is it?”

The above examples testify to male-dominated music-educational environments governed by certain types of masculine behaviour, language and culture, which women have to adapt to. If this is the case then gendering is inevitably extended to the student population.

3.3.4 Gendering of students

In discussions of gender in Music, the existing gender stereotypes around instruments, practices and behaviours were also discussed in relation to the student population.

UF2: ...when you put students in a group and ask them to form an ensemble, you tend to see stereotypes coming out there. You rarely see a woman on the drums. And you rarely see a woman programming or doing the live sound. You generally see females singing or playing the keyboard and even if that's not the thing that they're good at. Similarly, you will see the boys doing all quote-unquote masculine parts.

A participant discussing a position paper written by a female student who had claimed there were no “gender issues” within the School:

UM1: ...it turns out that the men are always standing forward and we can never step forward and do the songs and lead the sets...and then she felt quite confused because she did not want to have gender issues. But she did clearly have gender issues.

Similarly, where gender was discussed as part of a syllabus or in the contexts of other academic-related practices, a number of participants reported a certain kind of anxiety about being labelled “a feminist”:

UM1: One example is a student a couple of years back doing work on female composers who began the conversation at that very supervisory meeting with the words “I’m not a feminist or anything”.

UF2: We organised a conference a few years ago on creative women and so many people came up to me and said “oh no I am not a feminist”, as if it was a bad thing to be a feminist.

Attempts at a gender-balanced approach to teaching, that is, the incorporation of gender issues into a syllabus, have frequently noted by students and appreciated:

UM1: I had an interesting exchange with one of my most switched on and socially activist undergraduate students...what she thought about her experience here. And she said, and she seemed very grateful that it was genderless...

Admittedly, this student’s experience is based on a “gender aware” approach to the teaching of a particular module, which does not necessarily result in an overall experience of genderlessness; however, it does seem to be a positive step towards a greater sense of gender equality in the student population.

Some participants reminisced about their own student days and the ways in which the gendering of music impacted on their experience:

UM3: You know when I was an undergraduate I was actually an organist and the reason I stopped playing the organ was when I was at X, you know X’s interns are entirely male, the choir were all men and boys and I thought I couldn’t imagine working in an environment like that. I had to run away so that was it for the organ.

However, the participants were aware of the need to be pro-active when attempting to provide a more gender-balanced learning experience to students.

UM3: One of the problems with finding Scottish female composers, so if you’re creating a concert or something, [is that] there isn’t anywhere to find them, [it looks like there aren’t any] and actually there is, it is literally hard to find them.

UF3: After their degree, they will probably make certain assumptions about what they should do, and making them aware of what they could do...is certainly something we could do more of.

3.4 Practical, ideological and cultural obstacles faced by women

In the latter parts of the focus groups’ discussions the participants were asked to identify and discuss any practical, ideological and cultural obstacles they felt women encountered in their roles in Academia broadly and Music specifically. Below are the key themes that emerged from this part of the conversation:

3.4.1 *Starting a family*

Female participants shared a range of experiences associated with the possibility of balancing academic with family roles. Some have felt that following a great deal of investment in their education culminating in a completion of a PhD, and securing of a permanent post if they were fortunate enough to do so, disrupting their career by taking time off to have a baby would have disastrous consequences. Taking the above concerns into consideration, some of the female respondents reported making a decision to postpone motherhood, with a view to developing and maintaining their careers. They felt that taking even a few months of maternity leave would put them at a disadvantage within their academic units, where the ethos of dedication to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) prevailed. Something that could be termed “maternity leave anxiety” was noticeable particularly amongst women in the early stages of their careers, who felt a great deal of pressure not to “let down” their colleagues and their students by taking the time off.

UF3: And there's always some anxiety about maternity leave, and that is something I hear a lot about...what you read on HR website about, what sort of entitlements there are, and then what you hear happened.

UF2: I am not planning to have family at any point soon, but it is often at the back of my mind if I decided to have children, what would actually happen at that point? Because especially in a research area like mine, that moves really quickly...I am sort of thinking if I am out for six months or a year...what will happen, how is that going to work out and how is it going to reflect on my career progression.

Others have experienced various forms of discriminatory questions even during the interview process where they have been asked about their intentions with regard to starting a family. Some female participants reported that they had been asked explicit questions and questioned if this was “legal”, while others explained that the questioning was rather overt. For example:

UF1: I wasn't asked right out if I was thinking of having a family or not, but they pointed to the HR who was writing notes and was heavily pregnant. They asked “what are your interests?” and then pointed to her and to the book that the chap had written, and asked me to comment.

Not a single female participant in the five focus groups conducted reported having a family. Some commented that they had postponed the decision, while others remained silent. Due to a group setting it was deemed inappropriate by the researcher to pursue the question more explicitly with individual participants. They have, however, been invited to make individual contact should they wish to further discuss this or any other points. Where references were made to co-existence of motherhood and academic roles, there was a sense that this was a rarity as well part of a struggle to achieve work-life balance:

UF1: You have got women in the department and most of them do not have kids, and my fear is that they do not do it because they've got pressures at work...I've got very close senior friends in this institution and they have regretted not having kids. And they've done it to keep

their job!...There's one woman who has got a family and she is actually working twice as hard in the sense that she's trying to hold down the job and do everything at home...the men who work in our department tend to have families and the women tend not to.

Women participants did not find it surprising that women delay or completely rule out the family, as they were aware not just of the impact that the maternity leave may have upon an individual's career, but also the lack of adequate, funded childcare within universities, coupled with the timetabling of teaching between 9am and 6pm.

3.4.2 Masculine working practices

While female participants reported opportunities for training, development and possibly career progression through a variety of mechanisms that exist within their academic institutions, all opportunities seem to be modelled on a particular work ethic that encourages competitiveness rather than collaboration. For some, this was a pathway that they pursued and adapted to, while others did not feel they had to comply.

UF2: I went to a couple of events...and what struck me at these...what was sort of pointed towards was "you have to work for promotion, you have to make sure you represent yourself in an adequate light to get to this higher management level"...The issue of success is implied and this is what you have to comply with. And I mean what if I want to be a successful teacher, or even a successful researcher within my discipline, and not some sort of senior manager?

Both male and female participants have demonstrated an awareness of working practices being guided by a certain set of norms associated with a greater sense of value:

UM1: ...the problem is not with the question of difference, it's the question of norms..."by this point you are supposed to be here"... Russell Group medians, I mean what a disgusting way to measure someone's value, because people work at different speeds, have different needs, different priorities...

There was an understanding that the work they undertake is very much policy and KPIs driven, but also that there is perhaps a greater sense of flexibility in terms of working patterns than in some other sectors. Interestingly, this flexibility tended to be utilised by academic rather than support staff who:

UF2: ...are expected to be behind their desks nine to five every day other than if they take annual leave.

3.4.3 Lack of female role models

According to the 2013 *Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report*, 53.8% of staff working in UK higher education institutions in 2011/12 were women, and yet the majority of the female participants felt there were not enough positive female role models in their institutions or their academic unit. Examples of successful women in senior roles have been quoted:

UM2: We've had female heads of departments, we've had female professors but in the past...I can remember interviews for a head of department and there were no female candidates at all...

However, the lack of women in Music in any role was noticeable in all focus-groups:

UM1: When I first came here 12 years ago there were two women, and then we lost one so it was down to one, and then we gained one...

UM2: It's never occurred to me that I'm head of school because I'm male. Has it to anybody else? I wonder if that's a fair question for me to ask?...but we've never had a female head of school. Even when we've had full-time senior females.

UM1: It's always been more men than women, it has gone through a very low point in the past when we've had one.

The presence of other woman in the academic unit, and particularly women in senior roles, has been identified as having a positive impact on women's confidence, sense of entitlement, motivation and working practices. For example:

UF1: There's a lot more senior staff from a number of diverse backgrounds...so there is a sense of relaxation, acceptance and community that I didn't have before...when I joined here there were a number of senior women who were professors or in senior management. And because of that they would do the whole induction – “you can do anything regardless of whether you've got three kids” and what have you. So there is somebody to look up that you could identify with...

The importance of role models, who could also act as mentors, cannot be overestimated. While the majority of the participants had heard of the existence of mentoring schemes within their institutions, none reported their active engagement with them.

3.5 Transgender

The Gender Equality Charter Mark aims to address gender inequalities and imbalance in the arts, humanities and social sciences with respect to academic, professional and support staff; men, women and transgendered people. All the participants were informed of the above remit of the charter, and transgender surfaced as a theme in two out of five focus-groups. On one occasion the existence of a transgendered member of staff was acknowledged, but as they were not present the discussion was not continued. Within another focus group, reference was made to a transgendered student to whom a participant was related. The participant wished to point out that gay/lesbian and transgender issues are often conflated while they should not be, and that a great deal more education was required to understand the issues arising from transitioning from one gender to another, particularly around visibility and the need for anchorage to the desired gender identity. Equality Challenge Unit are currently updating their two existing publications *Trans staff and students in higher education* (2010) and *Supporting a student or member of staff who is transitioning* (2013) with the aim of providing a continuous guidance and support for trans people working and learning in HE.

4 Examples of good practice and recommendations

So far this report has provided a flavour of some of the themes, issues and questions that emerged from focus-group discussions within five music-academic units from different HE institutions. While the discussions were setting-specific, a number of parallels became apparent between the institutions, and the expectation is that those academic units who have not taken part in this research will be able to reflect upon and utilise the findings by exploring the extent to which they can be mapped upon their own working environments. Having shared their experiences, both male and female focus-group participants demonstrated a great deal of awareness of issues of gender equality, and put forward a number of examples of their existing good practice, as well as providing relevant pointers for individual or academic unit development that ought to be embedded into their practice. Below are some key action points that, according to the participants, would lead to a reduction in the gendering of roles, practices and behaviours, thus resulting in more positive and gender-balanced working environments:

- Proactively engaging with students, challenging their existing gendered perceptions about music, and presenting non-gendered choices in terms of topics, instruments, practices and careers.
- Encouraging and developing critical thinking about gender in students by strategically embedding gender in the curriculum through an examination of the masculine canon and by broadening of the “texts” used in teaching.
- Increasing the visibility of role models for students by inviting high-profile guest speakers who challenge gender stereotypes.
- Addressing own gendered expectations while working with students.
- Providing mentoring, encouragement and support to female students and staff pursuing careers in traditionally male disciplines. Raising non-gendered aspirations.
- Where possible, introducing blind auditions to avoid gender bias.
- Pursuing collaborative working with colleagues of different genders, and encouraging collaborative creative practices amongst students of different genders.
- Engaging with the support staff who did not respond to a call for focus-group participation and providing a forum for them to voice their views about gender in the workplace.
- Exploring existing mentoring schemes and taking advantage of them.
- Bringing teaching and learning (perceived as a female domain) and research (perceived as a male domain) closer together, thus disrupting some of the gendered expectations.
- Offering post-doctoral training to help early career women break into academic publishing.
- Providing grants, seminars and funding to support women in Music.

- Understanding and utilising flexible working patterns; recognising and encouraging different modes of working.
- Providing encouragement for male colleagues to take paternity leave.
- Providing equality and diversity training and encouraging active participation.
- Developing an understanding of gender issues within the broader context of equality and diversity, exchanging good practice with relevant organisational networks for staff and students, such as LGBT, BME and disability.

In its *Measuring Success* report (2011) the ECU suggests that the impact of the Athena SWAN award could be measured in the following ways:

1. Increased representation of women in higher academic grades, an increase in the percentage of women applying for promotion and some improvements in the progression from postdoctoral research posts to first academic posts.
2. Formalising and focussing of the existing, more informal organisational processes that support career development, flexible working and improvement of organisational culture.
3. Cultural change resulting in achieving a greater awareness of gender equality broadly, and gender and career progression more specifically. (Hawkes, 2011)

As outlined in the Introduction, there are plans for the Gender Equality Charter Mark (GEM) scheme to merge with the Athena SWAN Charter in April 2015, with the aim of bridging the gap between the sciences, arts and humanities. It is hoped that the impact of the Athena SWAN could be extended across disciplines, resulting in a greater gender balance in all academic, professional and support staff roles, as well as amongst the student population. Existing award-holding institutions have recognised the award as “a catalyst for change”, and described it as providing a framework for many schools and departments to undergo “a process of evolution rather than revolution” (Hawkes, 2011:21). The participants in this piece of research frequently pointed out that deeply embedded cultural norms and values (including those associated with gender) are the hardest to tackle, before agreeing that introducing a formal process that facilitates the commitment to a positive change would be a valuable first step in challenging the status quo.

5 Conclusion

The research presented here has been envisaged as exploratory, with the remit of running a number of “conversations” within Music, learning about gender equality in specific settings, and thus providing a baseline and pointers from which more definitive action can be taken. By commissioning the research NAMHE has demonstrated its proactive role and commitment to gender equality in our discipline, as well as facilitated access to institutions, schools and departments through those members who welcomed and introduced the research in their respective institutions.

A number of additional institutions have expressed interest in taking part in research; however, due to the scope and timescales available it has not been possible to accommodate them all. On several occasions the researcher has been contacted by individual members of academic staff who were keen to engage, to speak up and share their experiences, and who felt that some sort of forum where gender equality could be explored was long overdue in their places of work. The majority of such contacts were from women. During the course of research it became apparent that establishing and running focus-groups and providing safe, anonymous and confidential environments for conversations about gender became a form of “intervention”. Indeed, the process was not dissimilar to that expected by the ECU from academic units seeking an award, where a formation of the self-assessment group constitutes the first step of the formal process of the submission for an award.

The data gathered and presented demonstrates that the gendering of roles, disciplines, practices and behaviours plays a big part in Music, resulting in the under-representation of women in many areas and particularly at management and policy making levels. Furthermore, it confirms the existence of cultural and attitudinal barriers faced by many women throughout their careers, and despite the existing employment policies, practices and procedures whose aim is to ensure equality and diversity.

Previous research examining the impact of obtaining an award has highlighted the three common challenges experienced as a part of the process: the difficulties of data collection, the workload associated with making a submission, and getting adequate support from senior staff. While feeling motivated and enthusiastic about seeking an award, the focus-group participants also expressed the above concerns. The potential credence and the positive impact of holding an award has frequently been balanced out by apprehension about the amount of work involved and the level of support that could be provided. While some participants worked within larger institutions which had dedicated members of staff assisting the academic units with the process of the data gathering and the submission, others worked within smaller institutions where such support was not available. This raised the important issue of who would lead on and facilitate the process.

The Equality Challenge Unit provides a range of guides, resources, data, action and analysis templates for applicants. In addition, they organise several training days annually, where good practice, tips and information can be shared by those who have been successful in obtaining an award. From April 2015 Athena SWAN will be expanding to incorporate professional and support staff from arts, humanities, social science, business and law departments (AHSSBL), with a transition timetable allowing new applicants to submit for an award in November 2015. The full announcement of future arrangements will be made available on the ECU website in April 2015.

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