

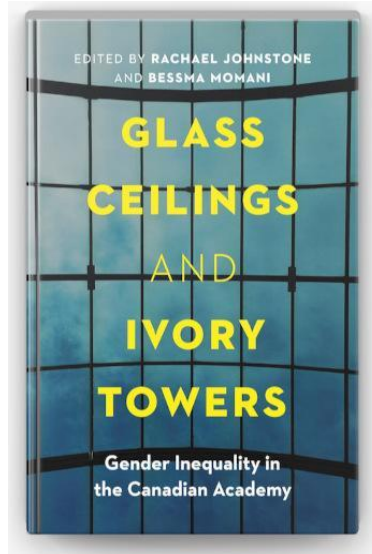


Johnstone, R. & Momani, B. (Eds.) (2024). *Glass ceilings and ivory towers: Gender inequality in the Canadian academy*. University of British Columbia Press.

332 pp.

ISBN: 9780774869263

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Glass Ceilings and Ivory Towers: Gender Inequality in the Canadian Academy, edited by Rachel Johnstone and Bessma Momani, offers a deep and empirically grounded critique of pervasive gender inequality in Canadian higher education regarding women faculty members. The book contributes to feminist institutional theory by providing a powerful analysis of how gender inequality is perpetuated on structural, cultural, and personal levels in Canadian academia. The authors seek to encourage those in academic spaces to focus on building communities and relationships that actively work toward

restructuring the historically exclusionary nature of higher education institutions in Canada, and they offer explicit strategies for doing so. This book is imperative reading for scholars interested in gender studies, critique of the neoliberalization of academia, education policy, and institutional change of universities. Although Canadian in scope, many of these insights are universal in nature and could benefit those around the world who are looking to reform their education systems into more equitable environments instead of simply offering more inclusion into oppressive systems.

Johnstone and Momani's treatment is neatly structured into four thematic sections; each is concerned with a different aspect of women faculty's experiences working and pursuing leadership and acceptance in the academy. The first three sections cover topics related to daily life for women in academia, the gendered dynamics of leadership, and structural and institutional discrimination. The final section seeks to offer concrete ideas for approaches to institutional and practical changes. Despite being broken down into distinct categories, many themes emerged between sections, showing the multi-faceted impact of many informal barriers to women's success and inclusion in academia.

The first of these themes is that women are expected to complete various forms of additional labor to be perceived as successful faculty members compared to the

Mulvaney, E. (2025, September 24). Review of *Glass ceilings and ivory towers: Gender inequality in the Canadian academy*, by R. Johnstone & B. Momani (Eds.) *Education Review*, 32.

<https://doi.org/10.14507/er.v32.4205>

labor of men. In Chapter 1, written by Sandra Smele and Andrea Quinlan, and 11, written by Janice Niemann, the authors criticize the importance of student evaluations of teaching (SETs), providing empirical evidence that SETs reflect bias against women that contribute to their marginalization, especially for racialized, older, and queer women. Women faculty note being required to do more aesthetic and emotional labor, such as applying makeup and acting as a mother figure to students, to meet arbitrary expectations set by students in the classroom, which is entirely unrelated to the stated purpose of SETs. These findings were reinforced by similar insights in Chapter 9, written by Jennifer Chisholm, Kasey Eagan, and Kristen Burnett. The authors identify the mental stress created by contra-power harassment that women in the academy face from their students. Some 90% of women faculty reported receiving contra-power harassment from their students in the classroom. It has become a completely normal aspect of the job that women cannot fight back against due to the threat of bad SETs given by the students they call out. All these forms of labor and abuse contribute to lower professional advancement and poorer mental health outcomes for women in academia due to stereotyping and systemic discrimination.

Additional labor for women is also found in service obligations, both at home and at the university, a focus of Chapter 3, written by Amorell Saunders N'Daw. Service is traditionally seen as the third and smallest pillar of a faculty member's responsibility behind teaching and research; however, women are typically asked to complete much more of this low-prestige service work for little professional benefit. Moreover, they are also expected to complete more domestic labor due to gender stereotypes. In Chapter 2, Tanya Bandula-Irwin notes that research ethics boards in Canada often take gender-blind approaches to their protocols, meaning that women researchers often must do more work on their own to ensure their safety. Drawing on critical race theory, Bandula-Irwin demonstrates that identity-blind review only impedes equitable practice and fails to achieve the fairness they are designed to create.

All this additional labor required by women in academia takes away from critical time needed to perform research and publish, which is the primary concern of tenure committees. This often leads early-career women academics to give up on the dream of tenure or to leave academia altogether. The impact of this additional labor clearly creates strong internal stresses for many women in academia. Combined with the impact of external stresses like gendered bias and discrimination, women's ability to achieve the same level of success and promotion as their men counterparts is severely undermined.

Another theme developed by chapter authors concerns the informal, oppressive systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice in Canadian academia to this day, and the need for non-performative allyship. The editors used several different approaches to create a clear picture of these barriers for the reader. Wage discrimination was frequently mentioned in the book, and Johnstone and Momani in Chapter 5 expose the disconnect between men and women that allow this discrimination to continue. Interviews with both men and women in academia revealed that male academics in Canada simply do not believe that the system is

inherently discriminatory against women, whereas the empirical evidence provided proved the existence of the wage gap and other inequities in outcomes.

These findings closely align with Cheryl N. Collier's findings in Chapter 13, which argue that men must be included in equitable gender-based reforms. Collier believes that policies like women's leadership programs present the gender barrier as part of their own shortcomings and alienate men from the process in a way that does not challenge the discriminatory foundation that allows this inequity to exist. Many men noted that they feel unable to speak up on issues of sexism because they do not feel sufficiently educated on the issue. Collier astutely argues that men should be trained on allyship for them to use their privilege to advocate for change, since they are statistically less likely to be ignored or receive backlash for advocacy than women. This approach may risk centering men's voices in already patriarchal spaces, but it does present a realistic opportunity to address these issues through allyship, given the lack of representation of women in leadership positions in Canadian academia.

Underrepresentation of women in formal leadership roles within Canadian universities is a pervasive problem. The various authors call for new conceptions of leadership that rely less on neoliberal, patriarchal traditions—conceptions that are proposed in part four, which is concerned with practical approaches to institutional change. The authors in part two advocate for a more holistic view of leadership, hoping to show the non-traditional leadership work that women do throughout their careers in academia. In Chapter 4, Anne Wagner and Sandra Acker note that women who lead research groups are much less likely to view themselves as leaders, despite performing the traditional roles expected of a leader. Some researchers attributed this to gender, racial, or class socialization of women in Canada, which teaches women not to brag about their accomplishments. Other research leaders create their teams with non-hierarchical structures, viewing their collaborative approach to research as unaligned with the western conception of leadership. These non-traditional leadership roles may work well for their teams, but in a neoliberal academic context, they ultimately set back the women engaging in these practices when receiving recognition for their work. In part four, the authors seek to dismantle these systems that devalue the work and leadership capabilities of women academics; they offer new, more equitable approaches to university governance and pedagogy. In Chapter 11, Niemann offers compassionate pedagogy – teaching with active kindness – as a new feminist-informed style of teaching that aims to provide all students, not just those who are suffering, with a universal level of kindness that presents strong community-building potential. Niemann provides the strongest call-to-action in the book. Her conclusion notes that there is a difference between simply wanting inclusion and wanting to reconstruct exclusive systems. Academics are urged to become revolutionaries who choose reform over inclusion to achieve more equitable, compassionate outcomes for everyone in the academy. The editors urge universities to dedicate more resources toward creating more effective channels of communication that allow for better understanding of grievances held by community members to directly channel efforts into specific reforms, rather than focusing on broad, often empty DEI commitment statements, which were critiqued throughout the book.

Despite the many strengths of this book, it leaves some unresolved questions. First, some chapters cited studies on U.S. institutions, and the heavy focus on North American universities may limit the applicability of these findings in non-neoliberal, non-western contexts. Second, the analysis occasionally presents the experiences of women in academia as universal, leaving room for further research that specifically identifies the experiences of marginalized groups of women to provide a more holistic, intersectional view of the varied experiences of women. Moreover, the treatment could also benefit from a more direct engagement with queer theory. Some scholars have previously called for reform of the neoliberal university through the lens of queer theory (Caravaca et. al., 2022; Batters & Squires, 2024). The discussion of how gendered labor and leadership expectations reinforce a binary understanding of gender would benefit greatly from a queer theoretical lens that seeks to identify and upend binary constructions. This omission does not discredit the book's contribution to the field but offers potential for future research.

The insights in this book extend beyond Canada and can be absorbed by global audiences. Scholars interested in gender studies, education policy and reform, and organizational leadership models will find this intersectional analysis enlightening. Those outside of academia who are interested in workplace equity can use the evidence in this book to challenge discriminatory practices in several different professional and societal settings. The application of critical theories throughout the book offers a strong critical lens to understand institutional inequity.

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About the Reviewer

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