

# Gender inequality in Russian Academia: dynamics, insights, and explanations

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## ABSTRACT

While operating under different names, both Europe and Russia are currently going through a period of social change in academia. Europe is pursuing reforms and transformation of academia in the context of the New Public Management, while Russia operates in similar settings of modernization, thus addressing excellence and effectiveness of academic work. In both cases, the processes underlying social change in academia result in a similar impact on female scholars' occupational advancement. By doing so, they reproduce the existing gender inequalities and create new ones. Russia finds itself in a paradoxical situation: while women represent the majority of (scientific) staff in academia, they face persistent discrimination at the hands of their colleagues – both male and female. Still, our knowledge of gender disparities and discrimination in Russian academia is fragmented and needs extensive investigation. In order to establish the necessary foundation for further systematic analysis, this paper aims to reduce the existing gap by examining gender inequalities from a historical perspective.

**Keywords:** Gender, persistent inequalities, academia, Russia.

## *Desigualdad de género en la Universidad rusa: dinámicas, percepciones y explicaciones*

## RESUMEN

Aunque bajo diferentes nombres, Europa y Rusia atraviesan actualmente un período de cambio social en el mundo académico. Europa está llevando a cabo reformas y una transformación de la universidad en el contexto de la Nueva Gestión Pública, mientras que Rusia opera en entornos similares de modernización, dirigiéndose así a la excelencia y la eficacia del trabajo académico. En ambos casos, los procesos subyacentes al cambio social en el mundo académico tienen un impacto similar en el progreso profesional de las investigadoras. Al hacerlo, se reproducen las desigualdades de género existentes y se crean otras nuevas. Rusia se encuentra en una situación paradójica: mientras que las mujeres representan la mayoría del personal (científico) en el

mundo académico, se enfrentan a una discriminación persistente a manos de sus colegas, tanto hombres como mujeres. Sin embargo, nuestro conocimiento de las disparidades de género y la discriminación en la academia rusa está fragmentado y necesita una investigación extensa. Con el fin de establecer los cimientos necesarios para un análisis sistemático más profundo, este documento tiene como objetivo analizar la brecha existente mediante el examen de las desigualdades de género desde una perspectiva histórica.

**Palabras clave:** Género, desigualdades persistentes, universidad, Rusia.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of occupational self-fulfilment of women represents a persistent challenge in many societies, as it is closely linked with gender inequalities in labour market. Although they have diminished over time, gender related disparities still exist not only in occupational pathways of women and men in the private sector of economy, but also to a significant extent in academia. With implementation of neoliberal policies, underlying the principles of free market economy, Europe currently pursues reforms targeting transformation of academia. Better known as the New Public Management, these administrative schemes regard scholars, along with all other individuals, as entrepreneurs who are able to steer uncertainty and risks resulting from flexibility as a given, normal condition (Lorenz, 2012). According to this logic, female scholars would catch up with men in academic career advancement since performance and efficiency are the crucial mechanisms of productivity measurement. Contrary to these expectations, studies have documented that women achieved better footing with men in higher education management and administrative activities, but not in academic positions (Fotaki, 2013; Krücken et al., 2013). To a great extent, the New Public Management stimulates the persistence of gender inequalities in European academia.

Similar to the developments pertinent to European scientific organizations, Russia also seeks to regulate the processes of modernization of the academic structures, thus addressing the excellence and effectiveness of scholars. Studies have shown that initial reforms of post-socialist academia in the 1990s largely failed disproving the assumptions they were based on (Kara-Murza, 2003). For instance, massive cuts of state funding did not incentivise financial and industrial spheres to create opportunities for knowledge production resting on the state and private funding. Neither did the process of self-organization of academia prove successful, as the ageing of scholarly staff appeared a structural problem (Asheulova & Dushina, 2014). Against expectations, the hoped-for mechanism of competition, comparable with the logic of the New Public Management, led to the displacement of young scholars away from academia and contributed to further shrinkage of the country's scientific potential. Did these and other processes affect gender inequalities in Russian academia? That is the central question of this contribution, which endeavours to shed light on the three important stages of Russian academia – Soviet, transitional, and post-

socialist.

Russia is facing a paradoxical situation: while women represent a majority of (scientific) staff in academia, they experience persistent discrimination at the hands of their colleagues – both male and female (Sillaste, 2004; Pushkareva, 2014). This fact is even more astonishing if one takes into account that the Russian Federation has ratified the ILO Convention No. 111 on discrimination regarding employment and occupation. This convention requires states to pursue policies that ensure the equality of opportunities for men and women in access to vocational training, work and particular occupations, without discriminating based on sex, wages and working conditions (ILO, 1958). Moreover, the Soviet Union formally empowered women to demand equal rights with men and granted them access to education and employment (Ajvazova, 1998). However, the ruling communist party and the governments afterwards considered the “women issue” solved and hardly introduced measures to reduce gender segregation and massive gender inequalities in academia.

The Russian tradition of investigating gender inequalities in general and discrimination of women in particular is limited to legal aspects and a psychological approach at the micro level. Thus, studies examine interpersonal relations in a micro group (family) and its dynamics from a biological perspective (Sillaste & Kozhamzharova, 1997). After its rise in 1990s due to significant societal changes and a deep economic crisis, this issue lost its attractiveness to scholars by the middle of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Pushkareva, 2014). However, Russia increased investments in research and development in the post-socialist period, having boosted the academic sector and creating new jobs. As a result, post-soviet academia recovered but gender inequalities remained.

While statistical data on fields of work of female academics have been collected since 1923, the role, social status and professional advancement of female scholars have been hardly investigated in the Soviet science. This peculiarity wandered into the scientific inquiry of the post-socialist period following the logic of path dependency. Since our knowledge on gender disparities and discrimination in academia is fragmented and needs extensive investigation, this paper aims to reduce the existing gap by analysing gender inequalities from a historical perspective. The objective of this contribution is to scrutinize the evolution of gender related imbalances in Russian academia and, particularly, to delineate how these are understood by female scholars. Additionally, the goal of this article is to examine the continuity of the persistence of gender inequalities by describing the three historical periods. Although providing a systematic overview, this approach is limited by the incompleteness of the data used, as many documents associated with gender inequalities in Russian academia are either sealed in the closed archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences or simply destroyed.

## 1. GENDER (IN)EQUALITY IN THE SOCIALIST PERIOD

In the Soviet times, occupational involvement of women became a social standard by the 1930s (Rimashevskaja, 2013). The socialist gender arrangement was shaped throughout the Soviet history, highlighting two simultaneous roles of women – a full-time worker and a mother (Temkina & Rothkirch, 2002). Against this background, the socialist state assigned women two crucial responsibilities legitimized by the rhetoric of civic duty and female appropriation (Ajvazova, 1998; Zdravomyslova & Temkina, 2002). Accordingly, women were expected to work, not to pursue their occupational self-fulfillment (Pushkareva, 2004).

Following the pattern of higher education that became widely accessible to women since 1920s, academia as a sphere of social production opened its doors for women with tertiary education, thus making it possible for them to promote the idea of Soviet modernization as scholars and lecturers. Particularly, academic career was standardized by 1925 through the introduction of two academic degrees: PhD (Russian – “*kandidat nauk*”) and Associate/Tenure Professor (Russian – “*docent*”). This circumstance gave scholars a chance at social and professional mobility, claimed to be equal for men and women. Due to the uniformity of evaluation mechanisms, academic qualifications reduced the barriers for women's career advancement at the PhD level. Women obtained access to the Humanities and then captured other fields of study like natural sciences and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). However, while lower levels of academic hierarchy presented relatively favourable conditions for qualification of women, the access to the higher echelons remained closed to women due to discrimination based on gender (Pushkareva, 2004).

Studies show that women in academia focused not on creative work, but dealt much more with simple routinized operations and clerical work like compilation of card indexes, archives' description, lab work, etc. (Pushkareva, 2004). Thus, Soviet academia achieved growth of absolute numbers of employed women: by the end of 1960s, their proportion among scientific staff increased only slightly (Bogdanova, 2004). In general, women succeeded in administrative careers inside the academia, and remained widely submissive in purely academic careers (Vinokurova, 1999). The average age of highly qualified women was about 3.5 years older than that of their male counterparts (Petrovskiy et al., 1990). According to studies, only 8.8% of female academics possessed a professorial position and 23% held a tenure track in 1966, a period of tremendous successes of Soviet academia (Kurganov, 1968). These numbers have been continually decreasing since the end of 1960s.

Such unequal career chances between female and male academics resulted from not only coercive state policies of gender mainstreaming but also the state centralized organization of academia. In many ways, Soviet academia represented a complex composition of the Napoleonic model with its strict

monopolization and traditional dependency on state funding (Smolentseva, 2003), coupled with the Humboldtian values of scholars dedicated to science (Kuraev, 2016; Gewinner, 2017). The centrally planned economy provided a certain dependence of any kind of activities (education, research and innovation) on the state and its funding (Dezhina & Kiseleva, 2007). This dependency resulted in the general inability of science to embed its achievements in manufacturing, healthcare and education (Semenov 2004). Throughout the Soviet period, Russian academia represented a model of division of teaching and research: although tertiary institutions were officially supposed to pursue scientific inquiry and transfer knowledge to students, they were regarded as incubators for prospective scholars and thus primarily as educational institutions. De facto, teaching took the primary role, whereas the new research was not pursued on a sustained basis, which made the past knowledge old and without the modern innovations. Moreover, women were regarded primarily as instructors who assumed responsibilities for the teaching process, thus investing considerable resources of time and effort in preparation and post-processing of courses. These commitments left little time for creative activities in their own research.

During the Soviet times, Russian academia could be characterized by a rather complex organizational structure. It consisted of three components: purely academic sector which included institutions under the Academies of Sciences of the USSR and the Republics; branch academies accountable to industry, which included organizations of ministries and departments; and universities and other institutions of tertiary education (Petrovskiy et al., 1990). For strictly scientific purposes, the state created purely academic research institutes of applied science accountable to the Academy of Sciences with its extensive branch structure. Since the Soviet state anticipated the need for militarization and defence, “the state mandate” implied the rapid development of technical, technological and natural sciences, thus leaving the humanities a role of ideological support of the Soviet policy (Deriagin, 2005). The Public Management of socialist academia consisted of a state ordered 5-year plan for productive research for mainly military purposes, whereupon legally independent research centers/institutes of academic or applied profile enjoyed exclusively state funding. One substantial disadvantage of this practice was a considerable isolation between the research institutes, institutions of higher learning and different sectors of industry (Gochberg & Kuznetsova, 2004). Since the official support of applied sciences clearly surpassed its funding of fundamental research, institutions of applied studies engaged higher numbers of auxiliary staff, particularly women (Nesvetajlov, 1990). This is especially true for female academics who were employed at lower levels of academia and served as assisting personnel. Their life courses thus incorporated predictable occupational paths that ended at the level of senior lecturer or senior assistant.

## 2. GENDER (IN)EQUALITY DURING TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

Since 1990s, Russian academia has undergone so far the greatest wave of its feminization (Mirskaia & Martynova, 1993). It occurred not because of seminal reforms of post-socialist academia, but rather due to a deep social and economic shock accompanying the severe crisis and societal change caused by the collapse of the USSR. Financial shortages both on individual and institutional levels caused individuals to adapt to the new situation. For instance, the socio-economic situation forced scholars to search for new, innovative ways in order not only to secure the continuity of their scientific work, but also to ensure an acceptable standard of living. One of the means of survival turned out to be occupational re-orientation of former academics, since the wage level sank dramatically together with academic prestige (Lebedev & Milenin, 1996). Especially men streamed into new, more prestigious and lucrative areas of social activities, mainly business and politics (Bogdanova, 2004).

Another coping strategy dealt with the maintenance of the social status against the background of emigration (Naumova, 2008; Latova, 2011). The discourse on the so-called “brain drain” has been extensively addressed in the Russian literature after 1992 but has failed to cause a profound reaction on a political level, with the exception of the governmental “Interdepartmental program of regulation measures of migration of scientific and technical personnel” launched in 1994<sup>1</sup>. According to statistics, a substantial number of scholars who left Russia have previously been active in research and teaching in STEM, whereas representatives of humanities constituted only a minority of 9% of those who left the country for work abroad (OECD, 1994; Lebedev & Milenin, 1996). Moreover, the main bulk of the emigrants consisted of scientific leaders (individuals with academic degrees) and male scholars younger than 40 who were actively conducting research and publishing (Tsapenko & Yurevich, 1995). Although OECD report argued that emigration carried a temporary character, Russian studies speak about a much more permanent trend of scientific emigration from Russia to Israel, Germany and the USA (OECD, 1994; Ushkalov & Malakha, 2000; Dezhina, 2002; Riazantsev & Pismennaya, 2013).

A third coping strategy available to the Russian academics was a passive adaptation and was widely practiced among female academics. Preservation of working positions in academia prevailed among women whose means of subsistence had been ensured by other household members, such as husbands or parents. Moreover, simultaneous engagement at several institutions of higher

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<sup>1</sup> This was the first and so far, the last governmental program seeking to protect Russian scientific and technical potential by creating favourable socio-economic, organizational, logistical and legal conditions of work and life for scholars in Russia, their effective participation in the international scientific process. More information available from: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102033064&rdk=&backlink=1>

learning or concurrent employment in the emerging commercial sector of economy proved to be the way to save positions in academia and to lead a semi-decent existence. It became partially possible due to the launching of the non-public sector in tertiary education after 1992 that spurred a development of numerous non-public tertiary education institutions (Gevorkian, 2004). Additionally, women partly contributed to the commercialisation of academia by committing to new academic commercial structures, which had little to do with research and rather squandered material and personnel resources (Tsapenko & Yurevich, 1995). For instance, these were practices of leasing and managing institutional resources (office premises) to emerging commercial firms, or institutionalisation of shady training structures targeting school-leavers and their preparation for university entrance exams. Parallel to a substantial outflow of men from academia due to a considerable loss of prestige of research and teaching professions and immense drop in scholars' quality of life, academia witnessed a significant loss of youth inflow. As a consequence, humanities became "female", followed by natural sciences such as biology, medicine and chemistry (Beliaeva et al., 2000; Vinokurova, 2009). However, the situation of female academics did not improve to any considerable extent: the overwhelming majority still stayed at the lowest and middle levels of academic hierarchy and regularly were stuck at positions of lecturers and senior lecturers.

Studies show that women's opinions regarding their career advancement varied: whereas a small proportion regarded their academic career development as real, a greater number of female academics considered it problematic or irrelevant to them personally (Beliaeva et al., 2000). Strikingly, especially women in their 30s working at starting academic positions demonstrated the highest level of dissatisfaction with their occupational status, whereas their older female colleagues holding positions of senior lecturer or associated professor expressed much more positive experience regarding an academic career (Beliaeva et al., 2000). It seems that early career academics anticipated career advancement that was contrary to the established cultural patterns of Russian academia. If they did not drop out, they got used to existing barriers in academia and accepted them as habitual with the rising age.

Representing a high degree of continuity, Russian academia of transitional period demonstrated women-friendly conditions to build an administrative career rather than an academic one (Vinokurova, 2009). Investigations reveal biological explanations for persistent gender inequalities in academia, such as different cognitive and/or psychological abilities of women and men, coupled with women's conformity to the established traditions inside the academia (Beliaeva et al., 2000). Moreover, female academics were often driven by silent consent to inequality as they internalised the patriarchal traditions and the belief in the "naturalness" of the mental and physical differences between women and men. Their gender identity was formed by gender stereotypes and traditional standards, combined with outdated beliefs about division of male and female social roles.

Such state of affairs resulted in unequal distribution of emerging research funding on the basis of free competition and independent investigation. Following enormous cuts in state funding of academia, going hand in hand with significant decline in prestige of applied science and the ageing of academic community, academia deteriorated and lost a considerable number of young scholars. Seeking to change the course of these negative trends, in 1996 the state approved a list of “critical technologies and priority directions” of development inside the academia (Varshavskiy, 2011). It consisted of defence technologies, space technology and civic aviation, nuclear technologies and renewable energy sources, as well as production of intellectual goods, information technology and pharmacy (Varshavskiy, 2011). These spheres of research were proclaimed essential and promised generous public funding, whereas other scientific directions enjoyed only basic state financing on a residual principle. Having inherited much of the Soviet system, the organizational structure of state regulation of Russian academia can be attributed to a centralized, traditional branch-oriented type (Dezhina & Kiseleva, 2007), thus demonstrating a high level of path dependency. The wide academic sector saved its socialist features of support by primarily public financing, whereas the very first changes in attracting resources from the industry and business community have been launched only recently. Some scholars explain such inertia by tradition of election of executive managers in academia and established culture of academic standards (Morgan, 2004).

Under the new economic conditions, the public sector of science proved redundant. Many scientific organizations could adapt to the new conditions and continued to exist mainly at the expense of efficient single laboratories and research groups, as well as other non-academic sources of income (such as renting). With the adoption of subsidiary practice and introduction of foundations supporting academic research, Russia gained strong international and foreign partners who provided substantial financial resources for academics, such as Soros Foundation (now called Open Society Foundations), John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Ford Foundation, European program “Tempus/Tacis” and others. The reputation and credibility of these organizations allowed to be considered the most influential investors in intellectual innovations in Russia (Batygin, 2000). Additionally, Russia established national agencies aiming at supporting (fundamental) research on a competitive basis (for instance RFFI<sup>2</sup>, RGNF<sup>3</sup>). These organizations until now enjoy the funds allocated from the state budget, thus remaining dependent on governmental resources. However, they stimulated demand on research and supported competitive projects based on such streams as initiative scientific projects, publishing projects, regional projects, and grants

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<sup>2</sup> RFFI – Russian Foundation of Fundamental Research is a state funded institution and has been launched 1992.

<sup>3</sup> RGNF – Russian Foundation of Humanities (and social sciences) is a state funded institution and has been launched 1994. Both organizations merged 2016.



for young scholars (Chizhenkova, 2014). At the same time, the business community showed little interest in investing in and funding of technological Innovations and research in natural sciences. Quite the opposite, its support of social sciences and humanities became striking (Yurevich, 2004).

As already mentioned, gender inequalities in academia of transitional period remained also under the conditions of partial restructuring of academia and its principles of existence. According to scattered small scale surveys, up to 45.7% of women in academia experienced discrimination during hiring or dismissal processes (Sillaste & Kozhamzharova, 1997). Moreover, at the institutions of tertiary education, women's time resources were to a greater extent spent on teaching and not on conducting own research, whereas the average wage of female academics was 35% lower than that of their male counterparts (Yarskaia-Smirnova, 2001). At the same time, the proportion of female lecturers increased to 50% (Sillaste, 2004). During the transitional period, research proposals for funding of men considerably outnumbered those of female academics. However, women employed at academic research institutes under the Academy of Sciences enjoyed higher rates of approval as opposed to men, whereas men from institutions of tertiary education (universities) gained more financial support from the state (Boutenko, 1999). While men's age had no influence on their access to funding, only early career female academics had better chances of receiving a research grant. In general, foundations supporting research showed little gender sensitivity, making academic merits of males more visible – an average support rate of women achieved 29%, and did not exceed the threshold of 40% in humanities (Semenov, 1998). Moreover, studies show that women performing project activities filled the lowest academic positions, such as research assistants, junior researchers and engineers (Alfimov et al., 1998).

All in all, while life courses of female academics in socialist times were widely predictable and linear till one certain employment status, they changed considerably during the transitional period. First, they became risky and sometimes even precarious due to financial shortages, massive layoffs and collapse of research enterprises. Secondly, they discontinued and diverted according to the new social challenges of jobs combination or dropouts from academia, followed by an identity crisis and search for new opportunities. Thirdly, social changes especially impacted the life courses of early career female academics, affecting their private lives by postponement of marriage, reduction of fertility and “deferred” parenthood (Pushkareva, 2012). Additionally, gender inequalities did not diminish and became even more pronounced: while academia remained a male domain with its predominantly male gender culture, female academics considered disparities a normal state of affairs.

### **3. GENDER (IN)EQUALITY IN RUSSIAN ACADEMIA OF THE POST-SOCIALIST PERIOD**

In many respects, the principles of interaction between academia and the state have hardly changed since the Soviet times. Public funding of academia accounted for 0.24% of GDP in 2000 and grew up to 1.1% in 2014, thus being considerably lower than the EU average of 2.09% (Eurostat, 2016; Rosstat, 2016). Since 2001, the state determined several top down endeavours to promote science, stimulate academic activities and prevent the brain drain. For example, it undertook initiatives like “The federal concept of science and technology for the period until 2010” (2002), several federal target programs addressing priority spheres such as technology, medicine and pharmacy, “The Federal Target Program ‘Research and scientific-pedagogical personnel of innovative Russia for the period of 2009-2013’” (2008), and “The Federal Target Program “Research and scientific-pedagogical personnel of innovative Russia for the period of 2014-2020” (2013). They developed a conceptual frame of continuous growth of academia, particularly emphasizing the following directions of agency: fundamental and selected branches of applied research, improvement of the state regulation of academia, preservation and development of human resources in academia, integration of science and education, and development of international scientific and technological cooperation<sup>4</sup>.

Regarding human resources in academia, most public programs accentuate the necessity of strengthening the prestige and attractiveness of an academic career, changes in the remuneration system of budgetary employees and creation of supportive conditions for early career academics. In addition, the framework programs identified further mechanisms of financial and social support of scholars who showed academic excellence and leadership. These are similar to the central ideas of the New Public Management in Europe. Specifically, this is a state awarding system that includes a significant increase of benefits for outstanding achievements in science and technology. Additionally, the current programs aim to increase supplementary incentives for those who hold an academic degree (PhD and tenure/associate professorship) and work in public research institutions and/or public tertiary education institutions.

Whereas the enumerated initiatives address key aspects of public regulation of academia, none of them aim at supporting female academics in particular. This derives from the Soviet legacy and its étatcratic gender order that determined gender policy throughout the socialist period. In 1936, it proclaimed women equal to men and bestowed upon them similar rights in the public sphere as those of their male counterparts (Ajvazova, 1998). As shown

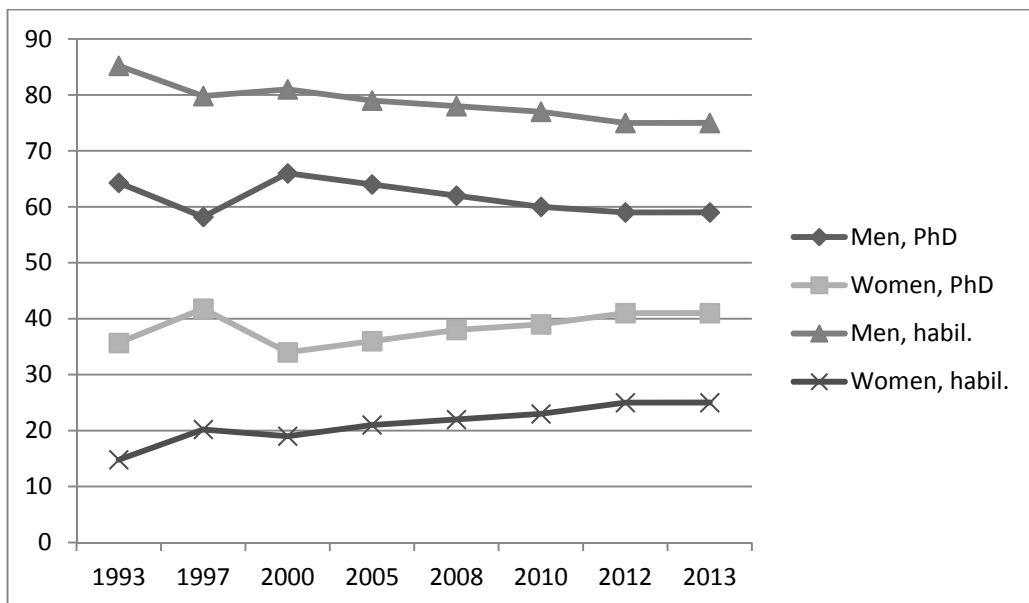
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<sup>4</sup> More detailed information on laws and programs available at:  
<http://elementy.ru/law/program.htm>

above, these rights have hardly been actually equal in socialist times and the gender imbalance turned especially acute during the transitional period as women academics found themselves nearly at the edge of survival. However, the state still operates within the categories of this putative equality and does not offer any alternative programs promoting women. This is particularly pronounced in all governmental legal documents on science and education: they deal with aggregated data on scholars and do not address gender related issues. The discourse of equality is thus qualitatively misleading when analysed against the background of quantitative improvements in proportions of female academics.

At the beginning of the post-socialist period female academics accounted for the majority of teaching staff at Russian universities: their share reached 67% in institutions of tertiary education in 2000 (Rosstat, 2014). However, as we move to higher positions (deans, rectors), these numbers fall considerably. The ratio of the average nominal monthly wage of women doing research amounted to 68% of that of men (Pushkareva, 2014). In general, academia is presumed to be a low-paid sector. On the one hand, female academics proved to be more conservative and less dynamic as compared to men during the transitional period. As a result, they were more reluctant to change their occupation and accepted dramatic societal changes that affected academia. On the other hand, they seized a chance to occupy the abandoned niche in academia by developing their involvement in research. Figure 1 demonstrates the proportion of female academics who held a degree (PhD and tenure professor) and performed research in 2000s. The trend clearly indicates that women could enhance their qualification level and slightly improved their academic status. However, the proportion of those with post-Doc qualification, a prerequisite to obtaining leading positions in Russian academia, constituted only one-fourth of all researchers. Moreover, the dropout rate from doctoral and post-doctoral studies is significant and amounts up to 75% at the highest level (Rosstat, 2014). In general, the higher the status groups within academia, the lower the proportion of women there, a peculiarity common for many European countries.

*Figure 1. Dynamics of female academics in research depending on degree, % to the total number of researchers (1993-2013)*

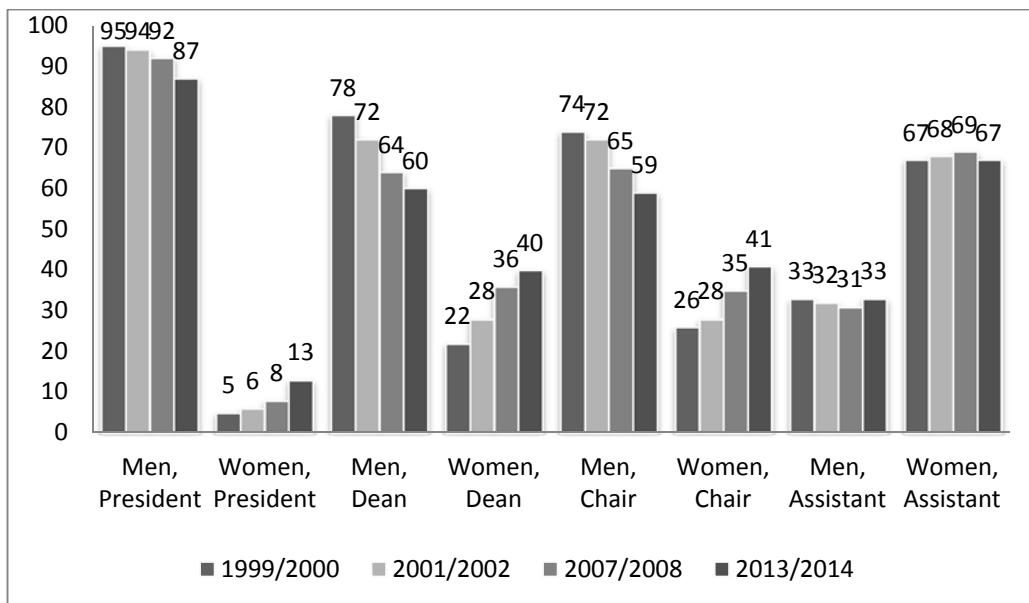


Source: Rosstat 2014, own calculations. “habil.” = tenure professorship

Strikingly, the most important scientific institution of the country performing research – the Russian Academy of Sciences – consisted of 456 full members (academicians) in 2008 (Pushkareva, 2013). Only three of them were women; and this picture replicates the state of affairs under socialism. Corresponding members of the Academy amounted to 683, only 23 of them being women (3.3%) (Naumova, 2008).

As Figure 2 reveals, male academics prevail at higher positions, thus making an academic degree a crucial factor for career advancement. Thus, career promotions are a matter of obstacle for women without PhD or tenure professorship. The data indicate the classic “scissors” issue inside academia, demonstrating a high degree of gender inequality: prevalence of men at senior positions and concentration of women in its lower segments. Indeed, the proportion of men in the highest positions of academia (president or rector) decreased throughout the 15-year observation period only slightly. At the level of faculty and chair management, men dominate as well – although with a tendency to change. The distribution of men and women at assistant positions remained constant during the last 15 years. Strikingly, while starting early career positions are open for both, men constitute only one third of the lower staff level in Russian academia.

*Figure 2. Teaching and scientific staff vs. management in Russian academia (tertiary education), %*



Source: Rosstat (Russian statistical yearbook) 2007, 2014, own calculations.

As shown, gender inequality in the Russian academia resembles those in academia in other European countries: the majority of women are relegated to positions of ordinary “performers” who play a subordinate role in the educational process and research. They occupy less prestigious or profitable levels in research and teaching. Concentrated at lower professional levels, women’s activities are often limited to non-creative types of work with low scientific recognition and personal satisfaction. Studies give insights in these kinds of jobs – it is a typical work routine, such as collecting information, coordinating meetings, executing evaluations and computations, writing drafts for papers, etc. Due to a substantial bureaucratization of academia and supportive grant system since 2000, one can assume that administrative activities of female academics will grow. Some investigations based on qualitative methodology revealed that men often take the credit for the work of their female colleagues and deliberately do not include them in the list of authors (Pushkareva, 2013). The majority of female academics are engaged in an ordinary middle-level work and only very few of them reach leading positions in research institutes of the Academy of Sciences and in universities. Under the conditions of “inbreeding”, slack competition and a low mobility between institutions, scholars’ careers often develop in linear academic trajectories inside one scientific institution.

#### 4. HOW CAN THE RUSSIAN CASE BE EXPLAINED?

One of the possible arguments is based on the traditional point of view

that academia represents a male sphere of activity, where the presence of women is inappropriate and undesirable. Moreover, a widespread belief that women academics are less competent than male scholars reinforces the former deep-rooted social belief (Pushkareva, 2006; Solovej, 2015). Additionally, the patriarchal gender culture impacts the maintenance of traditional views and attitudes of individuals. Indeed, throughout decades, girls were raised to obey and to work hard. Being better at school, they continue getting better grades in tertiary education. However, their occupational prospects meet constraints caused by family formation and childbirth, thus making it difficult for female academics to achieve a fulfilling work-life balance (Sycheva, 2005). Strikingly, women contribute to the persistence of gender inequalities themselves, by challenging cognitive and social qualities of their female colleagues who already are in a better position on the career ladder and wish to advance further (Pushkareva, 2006). Additionally, they widely share opinions that males are generally better at managing and leading than women (Egorova, 2001). Whereas the correlation between this opinion and educational level of women is direct, it demonstrates a high degree of stereotyping in academia and dependence of life course strategies on highly traditional views.

Secondly, institutional closure represents a unique mechanism of reproduction of gender inequalities in Russian academia. The specificity of science in Russia consists of the relative isolation of research institutions and universities not only from the commercial sector, but also from each other. According to sociological surveys, 40.6% of organizations conducting research carried out research projects on their own, 16.4% collaborated with other academic research institutes, 13.1% - with research institutes in the industrial sector, 8% - with universities, and only 0.8% cooperated with enterprises (Dezhina & Kiseleva, 2007). Moreover, grant funding does not explicitly require cooperation between institutions or scholars, thus resulting in single-base research projects and imperfect socialization environment for early career academics. Even a slow increase in public financing cannot be used effectively since resources are being distributed according to the old organizational culture and do not yield synergy effects of scientific teamwork. These peculiarities negatively impact women's academic mobility. International cooperation of Russian scholars remains humble, also due to their poor command of foreign languages. According to estimations, only 11.6% research organizations have collaborated with colleagues from CIS countries, and 17.3% - with colleagues from other countries in 2006 (Andreeva et al., 2007).

Furthermore, being out of tune with the European practices, Russian academia can hardly exhibit a powerful association of female academics addressing gender inequality issues. Notable exceptions represent such non-profit organizations like "St. Petersburg Union of Women in Science" or the association "Women in Science and Education". The former accentuates its divergence from purely feminism-driven activities and acts against inequalities that women face in academia. The latter actively campaigns for public support of education, culture and science, and has a unique experience in the

professional support of women, youth and implementation of gender projects (Vinokurova, 2008). However, these organisations concentrate on certain regions or single cities and do not carry a unifying function.

Another issue of the institutional closure represents a missing transparency of academic institutions, especially those under the Russian Academy of Sciences. Going further on the socialist path dependency, academic leaders hold their positions till a very venerable age and sometimes even until death. Moreover, a highly spread nepotism stimulates mostly male networking and favouritism inside academia, thus exerting influence on the importance of certain topics of inquiry and discourses. As an example, research proposals on sex composition of Russian academia are consistently blocked during or suffer from deliberate delays thus making the research impossible. From one front, research foundations refuse to support these issues. From the other, requested data sources remain inaccessible even at the primary level of content analysis of certification materials that could give insights into the publication activity and scientific effectiveness of female academics (Enikeeva, 2012).

The third possible explanation is based on the assumption that women deliberately refuse career advancement in academia. It rests on the premise that academia represents a heterogeneous community with its hierarchy and organisational culture and in an ideal case functions according to the principle of meritocracy. Hence, only the best and most productive members of academia receive credit and recognition among scholars and get career promotions. As already shown above, most Russian female academics remained at the lower and middle level positions on the academic ladder, and this trend has been quite sustainable so far. In contrast to the discourse of hegemonic feminism on existing constraints for women, the third explanation offers a different view on women's career lag. Specifically, it argues that women feel comfortable at the positions that they do hold, and enjoy their affiliation with academia without aspirations for further advancements. They do not admit the necessity to improve their language knowledge in order to capture international standards of academic writing and to produce laborious publications, nor are they interested in responsibilities originating from international collaborations that imply significant time investments.

Taking into account the already indicated dropouts from (post-) doctoral studies, we can develop additional assumptions on relative passivity of Russian female academics and their unwillingness to invest resources in an endeavour with an uncertain outcome. Some scholars describe employment in Russian academia as a process where women benefit economically without bearing emotional and psychological costs (Sokolov, 2009). Thus, female scholars occupy an attractive niche that provides them with high social status, flexible working hours and opportunities to practice "academic tourism" on a regular basis (Pushkareva, 2014). As previous investigations suggest, some women refuse getting promoted for the reasons of modesty or unwillingness to become

a public person (Pushkareva, 2013). Whereas women in top decision positions spend considerable amount of time in meetings and contribute to administrative work of councils and boards, “ordinary” female scholars of low and middle levels visit conferences and workshops, make internships abroad and in some cases perform as experts in consultancy or other projects. To a certain extent, the contents of scientific events turn out secondary as compared to conference venues and the geography of “academic tourism” (Pushkareva, 2014). Representing a symbolic good and an attribute of a high social status in Russia, tourism under the auspices of science makes female academics aspire to academic activities. At the same time, the enumerated features of academic employment make establishing of women associations antagonising the academic establishment with the talk of gender inequalities relatively superfluous.

Additionally, according to estimations, up to 75% of scholars carry out double, triple and more employments (Roschina & Yudkevich, 2009; Rosstat, 2014). This certainly Russian peculiarity – allowed by law – negatively affects the chances on occupational advancement. As mentioned above, these are mainly female academics who show preference for multiple employments, since it allows them to perform independently and to shape individual flexible work schemes (Roschina & Yudkevich, 2009).

## **5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Since the collapse of the USSR, Russian academia has undergone substantial fluctuations and social changes. Apart from serious cuts in funding on the part of the state, it has lost its original attractiveness during the transitional period, coupled with a substantial brain drain and a lack of interest on the part of youth. As a result, Russian academia witnessed a massive feminization throughout 1990s, going hand in hand with the establishment of the non-public sector of tertiary education. Additionally, the state introduced new mechanisms of public management of academia including grant system and support of research in business circles.

A remarkable feature of Russian academia represents one noteworthy paradox: while the proportion of well qualified women increases from year to year, female scholars experience considerable discrimination, and gender inequalities are likely to persist. The issue of gender segregation in Russian academia has a relatively long tradition. However, especially in the Soviet times, it has been treated from the perspective of biographies of individual representatives of Russian academia who earned awards and international recognition. In 1980s and 1990s, the question of status of women in Russian academia gained more attention of scholars. However, they only highlighted the feminization of academia and soon lost interest in this topic, having hardly developed rigorous explanations of latent and explicit gender disparities in academia. Furthermore, only minimal research attempts aimed to rethink the



position of female scholars in Russia.

In this paper, I highlighted the feminization waves of Russian academia from a historical perspective. By doing so, I attempted to give insights into the evolution of gender related imbalances in Russian academia and so to explain the nature of inequalities. Additionally, through explaining life course trajectories of female academics, I documented the continuity of the persistence of gender inequalities in Russian academia. Gender disparities already existed in Soviet academia despite the proclaimed and legally asserted equality between men and women. These inequalities hardly diminished during the transitional period: while the qualification level of female academics increased, their career advancement in the academic hierarchy stagnated and remained relatively low due to a combination of reasons. In the post-socialist period, female scholars occupied less prestigious or profitable levels in research and teaching. However, they consider it a natural state of affairs. Therefore, the myth that has been widely accepted in the official discourse since the mid-1930s in order to regulate gender relations remains influential in academia even today. Along these lines, a certain status group among female scholars tries to make the best of it: having found a comfortable niche in Russian academia, they enjoy a relative economic stability and do not aspire to compete with colleagues.

Although demonstrating developments of Russian academia pertinent to persisting gender inequalities, reaching over the last 100 years, the methodological approach deployed in this contribution is limited to the scope of available documents and sources. Using accessible information implies both advantages and detriments in historical research: on the one hand, existing materials guarantee the legitimacy of the subject of interest. On the other, the data are restricted to the popularized sources and are difficult to evaluate due to possible gaps in primary materials.

Several concluding remarks should be designated here. First, the patterns of gender inequality in Russian academia hardly differ from those in the EU, thus demonstrating similarities with one or another ways of latent and explicit discrimination of female scholars. Neither is the pursued course of reforms of Russian academia distinct from the logic of the European New Public Management. Despite the proclaimed equality of chances, Russian women still have a long way to go towards gender balance within academia. Secondly, whereas European patterns of gender inequality imply a severe competition between academics as a consequence of the New Public Management, Russian female scholars enjoy a comparably less pronounced rivalry in academia. However, this peculiarity is currently achieved only at the expense of high public costs, relatively low wages and divergence of the academic organizational structure. Thirdly, this paper demonstrates that only quantitative increase in the rate of female scholars does not necessarily yield gender equality in academia, since cultural traditions impact on human agency and introduce new coping strategies to overcome obstacles. This is the challenge to be addressed in the future studies.

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