'You must aim high' - 'No, I never felt like a woman': Women and Men Making Sense of Non-standard Trajectories into Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

It is no secret that the 'glass ceiling' preventing women advancing to leadership positions exists in academia as well. Spain is no exception. Gender relations are usually investigated independently of other power relations like class and ethnicity. In our sample (80 men and women in different academic institutions across Spain) we found that not only women but also men from working class backgrounds have difficulties making successful academic careers. Therefore, we use an intersectional approach to investigate the relationship between gender and class. Comparing two life-histories, we explore what strategies individuals employ to overcome the barriers with which they are confronted. We present the stories of a woman with a middle class but non-academic background and of a man with a working-class background. Their strategies can be understood as the result of specific individual trajectories under specific societal conditions, but they also illustrate the barriers and possibilities men and women with non-standard backgrounds encounter in academia. Analysing successful strategies as well as their limitations, we aim to provide perspectives that might contribute to changing the culture of hegemonic masculinities in academia.

KEYWORDS

Science; life-history; social class; gender; masculinities

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INTRODUCTION

In Spain, the entrance of an increasing number of women into universities has been related to a process of democratization, where women have taken up training in higher education and are able to obtain academic positions. Barral et al. (2014, p. 358) found that female academics were usually supported by parents who had a favourable attitude to their vocation and encouraged their daughters' skills during childhood. Social capital seems particularly relevant in the case of women.

According to the Genera Project, female researchers more often had fathers who received a university degree (26.7%) compared to male researchers (21.1%). Likewise, more mothers of female researchers (14.2%) had scientific degrees compared to those of male researchers (9.2%) and 13.5% of men compared to 19.6% of women had a father who was an academic.

Class as well as gender influence professional and individual practices and conditions (Martin, 2003; 2006). Individual and professional trajectories interrelate through the life course of male and female academics (González et al., 2015). The character of gender roles depends on the economic background of families which in turn influences professional trajectories. When it comes to access to higher education, in general class and gender play different roles. In Spain, as in many other EU countries, there is a process of 'feminisation' of higher education, while class mobility remains low. About 50% of those entering higher education in Spain are women, while only 21.1 % of men and women entering higher education have parents with lower educational backgrounds (Eurostat, 2009).

What we want to explore in this paper is how class and gender interrelate in a work culture shaped by dominant masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

WOMEN IN HEGEMONIC PATRIARCHAL ENVIRONMENTS

The literature on gender relations in higher education has identified various factors to explain the persistence of gender segregation (Bagilhole & White, 2011): labour market effects (Reskin & Roos, 1990), hegemonic masculinity cultures (Kanter, 1977; Valian, 1998; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and individual preferences based on gender roles and a lack of self-confidence (Ceci et al., 2014). Kelan (2008, p. 1192) explains that women retire earlier than men because they accept the risk of being made redundant earlier. The 'life cycle' norm in society for women leads to a particular risk perception by many women as they perform primary family roles. Women have to deal with risk and insecurity in a neoliberal labour market where ageing and male breadwinner discourses intersect with the expectations of women in male dominated professions. Cultural climates in academic departments determine women's job satisfaction and their aspirations as researchers. Dissatisfaction is another reason why women abandon academia or progress slowly (Fox & Xiao, 2013). However, women also express satisfaction in

scientific professions due to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. They may be able to maintain a comparably satisfactory work-life balance and to gain social prestige since their position represents upward social mobility (Scully, 2002). Fox and Xiao (2013, p. 148) argue that hours per week do not predict chances for promotion. Instead, individual practices, scientific productivity and interests are the strongest predictors, while stimulation and a collegial climate may also encourage women's motivation to achieve higher positions.

Stereotypical discourses about women's performance at work fail to recognise what Morley calls hidden transcripts (Morley, 2006). Organizational culture is embedded in a range of formal and informal practices that create gendered attitudes in men and women (Acker 1990, 1992). Since historically male dominance has been the norm, men and women engage unconsciously in segregated practices. They construct and regulate everyday experiences as well as norms prescribing promotion to further steps on the career ladder. Deem and Morley (2005) maintain that gender discrimination persists even in policy interventions such as gender mainstreaming or equal opportunities. Power structures in organisations are protected by the hidden transcripts in such a way that gender relations are reproduced through the individual actions of men and women.

Martin (2003, 2006) found that women and men practice gender through two-sided dynamic processes in organisations which involve agency and choices. Women often go along with institutionalized norms, avoiding structural changes. Due to hegemonic masculinity, women remain outside men's networks and formal power structures (Martin, 2003, p. 360). The power relations inscribed in the structures of organisations undermine women's confidence and their chances of promotion. Morley (2006, p. 545) explains that women feel discouraged in applying for senior academic positions or seeking appropriate training that qualifies them for seniority. They perceive few opportunities to become leaders in their organisations. Despite equality policies and gender awareness among staff, women usually experience misrecognition in meetings and misogyny in collective decisions of their colleagues. Morley (2006) gives examples of women being interrupted by men and of non-verbal reinforcements to encourage male contributions. Giving women tasks not related to research as well as discriminatory comments about their performance are additional factors that drive women to abandon their aspirations for successful careers. These practices marginalise women and perpetuate the image of them having less intellectual capital than men.

Martin (2006) explains the contradictory situation of women in academia (in either leadership or subordinate positions) where they feel good despite acting within a male terrain. The agency of women, she argues, often requires 'acting like a man' without being aware that this reproduces the power relations which subordinate them. Although they become part of academia, they remain in lower positions through complex relations of power that protect the establishment. Practicing class and gender stereotypes is a fluid and collective process (Martin, 2006: 268). The 'sayings and doings' take multiple forms, i.e. when men call women 'girls', infantilize them and ignore contributions of people who come from lower social classes. According to Martin, there are few opportunities for resistance.

Using the metaphor, the '(in)visibility vortex' Lewis and Simpson (2010) highlight struggles and tensions in academia through which male power is preserved. They describe how male power is imposed on women not through direct oppression but through the latter's strategies and counter-strategies of adaptation to a hostile environment. The subordinated are never entirely powerless, but surveillance and normalizing judgements produce a complex play of belonging and marginalisation in relation to the elite in academia (Lewis & Simpson, 2012, p. 145). They illustrate diverse strategies women employ ranging from the preservation of power to concealments of privilege, exposure and disappearance. The first scenario is the habitat of privileged women who are completely integrated into power structures. They are the 'queen bees' who act as preservers of the status quo. In the second scenario, women work under the authority of a male manager with great power but are located at the margin, signified by their low salary. Another group of women enjoys the visibility of the women-only status. Finally, disappearance comes with total invisibility: they are at the margins because they accept being part of the elite, even while excluded from top positions.

Arguments about women's 'lack of ambition' have generated extensive debates about the limits of motherhood, personal attitudes, male normative structures and interruptions of linear progression through organizational ranks. Generally, people with non-standard careers are confronted with obstacles to promotion (González et al., 2015). This inspires fruitful debates about the myth of merit and excellence (O'Leary, 1997; Bagilhole, & Goode, 2001; Scully, 2002; Rees, 2011), the influence of prejudices in hiring and promoting (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012), the lower confidence of women (Baker, 2010), and so-called frayed careers (Herman, 2015).

Interestingly, there are few sociological investigations addressing micro-processes through which men and women develop their ambitions. Although there are extensive discourse analyses of how men and women (un)manage leadership, authors have not analysed the construction of social and gender relations of power at the micro level. Sools et al. (2007) shed some light on the distribution of power in organizations and women negotiating diverse ways of 'doing ambition'. They present ambition as a concept used and practiced differently by men and women. Power is instrumental to men, while it has negative connotations for women. Women seem to dissociate themselves from the general picture of power in organisations. They have to gain promotion without showing that they want it, because if they do they will be punished by their colleagues (González, 2014). The class background of men and women managing power has been largely omitted in empirical research, although it is clear that ambition is a concept that relates to social positioning and cannot be reduced to individual competencies (Sools et al., 2007).

To summarize, the 'leaking pipeline' is an important issue in women studies (White, 2004). The gender gap remained within every field of knowledge and every country that we observed, and thus there is a need to better understand its origins in order to overcome it.

METHODOLOGY
Our project collected 80 gender-balanced life-histories in Spanish academic institutions to understand people's trajectories from their point of view, the decisions they made to develop their capabilities, and the influence of other people helping or hindering them to reach the positions to which they aspired. To reflect the diversity of academic institutions we have selected research centres and departments across the country and across disciplines in different kinds of institutions including universities, private research centres, and hospitals (González Ramos et al., 2016). Analyses of other data has been published elsewhere (González et al., 2015; González et al., 2016), and will be analysed in a monograph.

For this article, we have chosen ecology as a case study because it seems a more accessible environment for women researchers: they outnumber men in the majority of career paths in that discipline, except when it comes to professors and leaders of research teams. According to a Spanish report (UMyC, 2014) women in ecology received 56.5% of doctoral degrees, 62.5% of postdoctoral grants, held 54.7% of assistant positions and 47.7% of tenure track positions but only 13.8% of professorial positions.

The research centre we investigated in this paper displays a similar distribution: women represented 53.1% of postdocs but only 18.2% of the total staff. There were no women on the board. Statistical data on the class background of the staff was not available. In this centre, we carried out ten life-history interviews. For the purpose of this article we have chosen two non-standard trajectories: a woman and a man with class backgrounds that were underrepresented in academia. Such 'extreme cases' (Flyvbjerg, 2006) can shed light on the possibilities and barriers that individuals encounter when they aim for a position according to their capabilities. While standard trajectories may show smooth career paths, it is when individuals who are strangers to the dominant culture enter its territory that barriers become visible. Also, these two individuals were selected because they were in their fifties and held similar positions in the centre (equivalent to a full professorship) which allowed us to explore their histories from the beginning of their careers through to their current leadership position. Despite similarities, they occupied contrasting positions at the centre and the their peers differed.

To understand the strategies that individuals use to overcome structures of discrimination we will employ Alessandro Portelli's (1997) notion of the 'range of possibilities' that are available to individuals in a particular place at a particular time. How do life trajectories shape the way in which individuals perceive possibilities and barriers and the strategies they employ to overcome them? How do social relationships and cultural structures support or hinder professional trajectories for individuals from non-standard backgrounds in academia? What kind of perspectives can be developed from analysing the strategies developed by specific individuals with particular 'biographies' in specific times and places?

ANALYSIS

In what follows we aim for a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the barriers and possibilities that strangers to academia encounter, and of the strategies they develop to overcome those barriers and embrace opportunities. The paper is structured in the following way: firstly, we present a short biography of each of our protagonists; secondly, we analyse their strategies to enter into academic positions, to remain and to progress; and thirdly, we relate these strategies to the social environment and power relations that exist in the research centre where these two people work. Lastly, we draw some conclusions as to whether or not and in which way our analysis of these two cases can illuminate gender and class relations in academia more generally. To make the text more readable we will give the interviewees pseudonyms: Clara M. and Max D. Their biographies will emphasise what we think are decisive elements in their lives. We have changed the places from where they come and where they currently live in order to ensure anonymity.

Biographies
Clara
Clara was born into a middle-class family; her mother was a small shop owner and her father was a middle-ranking civil servant. They were able to afford further education for Clara in the arts and languages, enabling her to leave home as a teenager. Her parents belonged to opposing political factions and Clara rejected the political position of her authoritarian father, while supporting the position of her mother. She spoke in detail about her family and the conflicts she experienced between her parents, where her mother subordinated herself unduly to her father. This led to the decision never to be dependent either financially or emotionally on a man. After finishing her studies, she spent three years practicing art. However, there came a time when she felt that life as an artist did not satisfy her sufficiently and she wanted to work as a researcher as well. She was able to do her PhD at a centre that was being established, and in which she has worked ever since. First, she was offered nothing more than a place in the laboratory but soon was asked to lead projects which the exclusively male staff at the time did not want to take on. She enjoyed the work and in retrospect considered it helped her to develop her career, as well as providing a needed income at the time.

Max
Max was born into a working-class family; his father was a metal worker and his mother stayed at home most of the time. Max did not speak about his childhood in any detail, other than mentioning he was an only child and his parents encouraged him to study whatever he wanted. Having studied biology, he thought that there were no job prospects in this area and in order to maintain his young family he began working in the business of his parents-in-law. Like Clara, he remained outside academia for three years, and was dissatisfied with the work he was doing. However, after the birth of his first child he needed to earn money and thus began eight years of combining a teaching job with studying.

After receiving degrees in pharmacy, biology, and chemistry he started working for no wages assisting senior staff in the research centre where he still works. Later he acquired a low paid position, still requiring him to teach at a polytechnic. His wife

supported him by taking on paid employment to add to the family income. After receiving his PhD, it took several years until the centre offered him a position that allowed him to work exclusively as a researcher. He described his eventual success as the result of transforming his PhD into a series of articles in peer reviewed academic journals and getting one of his findings published by *Nature*.

Strategies: Entering as outsiders

According to Foucault, one of the rules controlling discourses is the ability to reduce the number of those who are allowed to speak: '…none may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so'. (Foucault, 1971, p. 17). Neither Max nor Clara qualified from the outset to enter into the academic discourse; they did not come from academic households and at the time Clara belonged to a minority of women who aspired to an academic career. Nor did they belong to any networks that would facilitate their way into academia. While Clara studied at a renowned, but reactionary University, she rebelled against its system and was thus declared *persona non-grata* after she had finished her degrees. This worked against her when she applied for a scholarship to write a PhD. Called by the professor who had to decide about the scholarship, the Rector of her old university told him, 'you've got the devil in your house'. As a result, the scholarship was denied. Suspecting that her 'reputation' might follow her forever, Clara thought of an alternative way to begin research:

> … one day I decided – and that is something I later learned to do during my whole life – 'aim high!'. The narrow minded are in the middle, aren't they? … And thus, I went to do something that caused me panic, I decided to talk to 'God', to Dr. Margalef[1]

She believed she would never make it through the regular channels since the gate keepers were concerned about their own careers, subordinated to the structures of power and thus subordinating others to the same structures. Aiming high meant to approach somebody who would be interested in ideas, who had already made his career and would therefore not be afraid to help an ambitious young colleague. But from where did she gain the courage to approach 'God'? The answer might be found in her biography. Leaving home as a teenager with two qualifications that allowed her to live independently, she became part of a minority group of resistance at a reactionary university:

> Of course, we were a united front, we were 11 people living in one house, something that was also forbidden. It was a group of resistance where I learned to live and share things with many people in the midst of a dominating enemy, to laugh a lot about this enemy, because we laughed about everything.

In another context we have coined this position the 'insider outside' (Mulinari & Räthzel, 2007). It describes an insider in terms of class and ethnicity, who nevertheless does not fit into the dominant categories and is therefore not accepted into the dominant societal structures. By becoming part of a group defining

themselves voluntarily as outsiders and creating an alternative community, the insider outside can develop sufficient self-esteem to become successful within the dominant structures. We suggest that the strength developed in her 'united front' enabled Clara to 'aim high' as a strategy of overcoming marginalisation. Her hopes materialised when the internationally acclaimed professor appreciated her qualifications, including those that were gained outside of academia:

> So, I went - more dead than alive - and the way he received me was magnificent, because when I told him, after he had asked the question millions had asked me before: what else interests you, or what have you been doing? I thought, am I going to die the same way as always? Well, he was delighted! Because he also had artistic interests. … He also liked the thesis I had proposed, because he was working on the same issues in the area of water.

While Margalef could not employ her, he provided the necessary connection to a research centre, where she was given the chance to work in the laboratory – though unpaid. Now she needed two more things: money and somebody to supervise her thesis. For the first, it was again her outsider position that worked to her advantage. She was offered the opportunity to lead a project in 'applied science':

> In the past my dear colleagues here, who were all men and university professors, thought that this was a degeneration of science. … since I had to earn a living, I accepted. And I enjoyed it very much, I loved to be in contact with reality. I paid for the thesis, partly with my art, but predominantly working. … I started to lead teams, while still doing my thesis – huge teams. I was the first women leading the first public project that dealt with the environment. It needed almost the qualification of an engineer. They thought the end of the world was near: "A woman directing the work of machine operators". I began work at eight in the morning with my team and then went into the laboratory at 6 in the afternoon to work on my thesis. Sometimes I stayed until 2 in the morning.

Clara was an outsider not only because she was a woman in a 'man's job' but also because of the subject matter she had chosen to investigate. There was nobody in Spain investigating this issue. She therefore contacted a famous scientist in France. The story of their encounter is worth recounting because it speaks volumes about the effect of gender relations on its victims:

> I was reading some papers by somebody called F. Athias-Binche and I wrote and asked for additional publications. I received a bag with all publications (at that time we didn't have the internet) together with a note saying, "I did not know that there was somebody in Spain working on this issue". … And so, I answered, "no, there is nobody, I am on my own". I received an answer saying, "why don't you come and we talk, maybe I can help you with something"? And so, I said, "olé, olé, olé", and I went there. After two hours going in circles in a big hall where nobody took notice of me … a small lady

> with a bad temper positioned herself in front of me and asked: "And you, what is your name"? "I am Clara M.", I said. "Oh, my God, and I am Françoise". … We had been communicating in English using our last names and so we both thought that the other was a man … and she said there were no women working in this area. There were no women in her department, she was the only one. We were two women alone in the world!

This account is telling – it tells us something about the way in which gender relations are internalised even by those who are its victims. As Martin (2006) notes, women themselves do not expect to find other women in important positions in academia. It is this internalisation of hierarchies that makes it difficult for women – and any marginalised group – to fight against their subordination. Frigga Haug argued that women were not mere victims. They also take part in their marginalisation through what she called 'self-subordination'. Normally, we think of agency as rebellion or at least the assertion of one's own will. Haug argued that subordination, compliance with the norms that subordinate us, is a form of agency as well (Haug et al., 1980). Eventually, the French scientist became Clara's supervisor helping her to complete her PhD. They remained friends until Athias-Binche died.

Coming from a poor family Max too lacked the networks that were needed to enter academia: 'Nobody knows me. For 30 years I have been working outside the town I was born and live in. In addition, I am not from any important family. As I said, my parents were poor and workers'. He was an outsider but not a member of an outsider community like Clara's group of students. Thus, the possibility to transform the outsider position into a strength was not open to him. He took a long and difficult road into the system, working exceptionally hard to turn his outsider status into that of an insider.

> The fact that I was a bit of an outsider, that I had to do things without a scholarship, without a project, everything at my own expense, without any kind of patrons. It is very hard, very hard. I had an especially bad time when at the age of 40, when I had finished, when I had done enormous sacrifices to write the PhD, the Masters, to take the pharmacy exams, when I had prepared a solid base and then to see that probably it was worth absolutely nothing.

This referred to the fact that he was not able to become a pharmacist because it was too expensive to buy a pharmacy. While Max did not 'aim high' to make up for his lack of networks in academia, he did become part of local networks. The association of parents at his polytechnic included the owner of a forest who allowed him to do experiments in support of his PhD. The knowledge he acquired through this work then opened a further door into the research institute, where he worked unpaid to help his supervisor and other researchers set up an experiment. This was followed by his first contract at the centre, as he explained:

> Well, I got a contract and started to work here three afternoons and one Saturday morning each week. I had not finished my studies yet, I worked all

the hours I could but officially it was this. It was the worst contract you can imagine. But well, I started practically at zero, I had only one indexed publication.

Step by step his contracts improved to allow him to spend more time as a researcher and less time teaching. It took him another 12 years before he obtained a job that allowed him to quit his teaching job entirely and concentrate fully on research, becoming a member of large research projects.

Social relations vs. individual achievements
Clara experienced her route into academia as a series of opportunities that presented themselves to her through the support of others: a friend of the family in her childhood who taught her French, encouraged her to take up art, supported her desire for freedom and thus enabled her to leave an oppressive home; the support of the famous ecologist who facilitated her path into the research centre; the French scientist who offered to supervise her thesis; the colleague who sent her laboratory machines she could not afford. She saw their support as connected to her achievements: 'I get angry when they say: you were lucky. No, I wasn't lucky, I have worked for it and deserved it'. In her account, support from colleagues, international networks and researchers, not only outside the centre but outside of Spain prevailed.

Max experienced his life trajectory as a series of sacrifices and hard work, as a path he had to create by walking on his own. Except for his supervisor, mentioned towards the end of the interview, and for his wife, mentioned after a question by the interviewer, he did not emphasise the help of friends or colleagues. somebody. For instance, because he did not have time to go to all the classes during his studies, he had to prepare the assignments alone. Later he set up the experiment, which became the basis of his thesis, by himself. In spite of his difficult journey to become a successful researcher there was a visible thread holding his story together. During all the years he struggled to combine his aspirations as a researcher with his obligations towards his family, he was always part of the research community at the centre, employed in projects for which his supervisor received funding.

Clara could overcome her lack of networks because she lived in a community outside of academia, which gave her the confidence to search for support from influential people who saw her as an asset not as a competitor. She searched for and seized possibilities outside the centre through which she found a relatively quick way into academia. Her problems started once she was inside.

Max made his way within the existing power structures with no experience of an alternative solidarity that could have supported him. He had to struggle longer to gain acknowledgement from a community that would at first not accept him as an equal. His problems diminished once he was inside.

The private and the professional

How did their private social relations influence our protagonists' way into the system? Clara lived with men but, as she related, they kept confronting her with impossible alternatives: 'I or your work, I or your art, and even, I or your cat'; 'As you can see, I still have a cat'. She continued:

> I have never met a man who didn't try to block me …. hmmm, maybe it was my fault? I got to the root of this when … I had therapy for four years … and, when, … I was already doubting myself, I was asked, 'why do you always search [for] men with an inferior profile?' But then I found out that, … each time I met a man with a profile superior to mine, he wanted to put his foot on me, so that I wouldn't be his equal … And that is something I cannot bear.

The pauses and unfinished sentences indicate that not having a stable relationship was a hard price for Clara to pay. It was not her academic career in a narrow sense that constituted a problem for male partners; it was her desire for independence that came with a satisfying profession. If women are not prepared to make compromises, they often find that they cannot have both a fulfilling profession and a fulfilling relationship.

Max found a partner who did not question his career aspirations but instead took an unpleasant job to increase the family income. However, his family played a contradictory role for him; while his wife's employment allowed him to earn little while pursuing his career, obligations to his family also put him under pressure to earn a salary:

> We have had a very hard time, my family, my wife, we had a very bad time … Because she continued to work in a business she did not enjoy. … And the first son, of course, basically, his grandparents had to take care of him. … But the girl, when we had her, when she had her, my wife could stay at home for two years because I already earned a bit more.

Both Max and his wife did not enjoy working in a business just to earn a living. For Max the solution was another kind of work, while through his story it seemed that for his wife the solution was to become a housekeeper.

It is recognised that women have more difficulties reconciling academic work and family life than men (Mason et al., 2013). What we learn from Clara's account is how deep is the pain women can experience if they do not want to sacrifice their love of research for love of a partner. Max's description alerts us to the contradictions in family relations which create support and pressure simultaneously for both men and women.

Structures: who can become a speaking subject?

We remember Foucault's analysis that not everybody is granted the right to enter the discourse, to become a speaking subject. But Clara and Max have entered the academic discourse, that the power of dominant masculinities granting – or refusing - the right to speak defined their position in the system.

When the Director of her research centre learned that Clara was applying for a European research grant, these were his reactions:

> … he looked at me as if to say: "have you been drinking?" The only thing he said some days later was "are you still preparing for that grant?". I said, "yes, and I am dying, because I am exhausted. It is the most difficult proposal I ever wrote". And he said: "And if you don't get it, what are we going to do with the time you wasted?"
> … Two months later the team in the United States confirmed that they would accept me into their group. … When I went to the head of department and said, "I have the team, the Americans have admitted me, will you let me go?" he looked at me as if I was a ghost. …: "I can't believe it" – "You can't believe what?" I asked. He answered, "I wouldn't have thought that such extraordinary researchers would be so easily accessible". You know, the subtle ways to make you feel you are nothing.

The literature on gender relations confirms that the more women succeed in an academic male culture the more difficult life may become for them (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Baker, 2010; Fox & Xiao, 2013; Reskin & Roos, 1990). Clara and the head of department built up the centre together but 'the moment he took over the directorship of the centre, he suddenly surrounded himself with a Praetorian guard of men', Clara recounted. Her former friend reached a higher position in the department, while she earned higher scientific merit. Thus, there was a double 'incentive' to distance himself from Clara: to cement power by surrounding himself with those whom he regarded as his equals and to marginalise anybody whose greater achievements might question his power.

For Max things turned out more favourably once he reached a position as a full-time researcher. He saw this upward mobility as an effect of his merit:

> I now have more than 100 publications … And, well, I don't know, what will happen now, it is a bad time. At the moment, there are no good positions anywhere. But now, what I earn as a scientist here and the additional salary I get from a research project, well, OK. Of course, I have to feed the family, pay for the house, everything, and therefore I have to work so much. I don't know if that has been understood, more or less.

This last sentence indicates that Max did not want to be seen as somebody who is only interested in money. He did not speak about it, but we can infer from the fact that he married into a family who owns a business and that he hinted at constant conflicts with his parents-in-law that there might also have been pressure not only to maintain the family but to maintain a certain lifestyle. Max was not simply the story of a working-class man struggling his way into academia but also a story of a researcher struggling his way into academia under conditions of neoliberal restructuring (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000) and a financial crisis leading to significant cuts in the system of higher education. In Spain, during 2011 only one of

10 vacant professor positons were filled, while none was filled between 2012 and 2016 (González Ramos et al., 2016).

Max had made his peace with academia. When the interviewer, a woman, asked him if he sometimes felt uncomfortable in academia, like women who felt they did not really belong there even if they were successful, he answered: 'No, I have never felt like a woman', thus distancing himself from being an outsider when this position was feminised.

Asked again about the networks necessary to enter academia, he clarified that what he had said earlier applied only to the small town from which he came:

> Not here, here you do not enter through this (*networks, authors*). Here you enter because you have the right CV, because they conduct interviews, you see what kind of character the person has, what they can contribute.

However, Max did not enter the centre through a process of interviews. Rather, he worked hard with no or very little payment before he had the necessary official qualifications. Max now felt at ease in the department where he had acquired the position of a respected researcher and leader of important projects:

> I do not feel like competing against anybody. I am competing against myself in a good sense, to improve. … Our team is the biggest, the one that has the highest impact, and it is the most famous at the centre. OK, there are others … which are very good as well, which are quite big, they conduct less research, they are more into development.

Focussing on the quantification of research reflected perhaps the need to prove that after such a long process of access he was finally part of the system. He had entered the discourse, become a legitimate speaking subject, strengthening the dominant discourse.

Clara's strategy to succeed at her department through acquiring international funding and reputation had not brought her closer to becoming a legitimate subject. To cope with marginalisation, she lived a parallel life outside academia. She continued to practice her art successfully, at a national and international level. It was the recognition she received outside academia and in international academic contexts that enabled her to remain within the system. But it was also this strategy which allowed others to construct her as different, as not belonging. Notwithstanding her scientific record, life as an outsider constituted a constant pressure:

> It is incredible that you have to carry this burden … That to live has to be a heroic act. That is what is so unfair, of course we live, but others can live normally. And you survive this … why? Because you have accepted to be a heroine. … you go to your female friends and you see what they have become. Half of the country taking Prozac. Did you know that the World Health Organisation has become aware of Spain because they did not

understand why there are so many women with psychological problems here? … Those are the ones that could not accept the position of a heroine. And thus, they have become hysterical, material for Almodóvar, who is very funny. … And I don't want that, I just want them to leave me alone.

Lewis and Simpson (2010) describe different kinds of women's visibility/invisibility: exposure, concealment, and invisibility but, they argue, there is no normality. Clara occupied the position of exposure which engendered constant conflicts draining her energy. A heroine might be feared, even respected by some, but she will never become part of the community.

CONCLUSIONS
Our 'thick description' of individual strategies and structural barriers (maintained by individual actions) aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological and material costs individuals with non-standard trajectories have to pay to survive within academic structures.

Choosing two 'extreme cases' from our collection of life-histories we also set out to analyse the power relations of class and gender. Both our protagonists have become senior researchers with highly successful scientific track records. However, only our male character has been allowed to become a legitimate speaking subject, while our female character remains an outsider.

Statistically, class is a bigger hurdle for entering academia than gender (Eurostat 2009). What our examples indicate though, is that it might be easier for men with a working-class background to be accepted once they have entered academia. Of course, we cannot conclude this by simply generalising from one example. There is, however, a theoretical reason that supports this. The history of social and natural science is a history of dominant masculinities shaping academic cultures. Dominant and subordinated masculinities have something in common: they define themselves in opposition to and through the subordination of women[2]. This might explain why Max, even though his road into academia resembles quite closely a typical female trajectory (working overtime, starting with no or very low salaries, helping the permanent staff), rejected the idea that he could 'feel like a woman'. It might also explain why Clara was more controversial among the male leadership than other female researchers. Her bold attitude, her successfully 'aiming high' and her independence were not the way in which women were supposed to act and feel about themselves. Max could be accepted into the dominant male structure as he identified and could be identified as one of them. The closer Clara came to 'act like a man' (we remember her first job leading all-male projects) while identifying as a woman, the more unlikely that she would be accepted into the leading club. The way individuals perform gender-coded identities constitutes one of the bases for their inclusion/exclusion (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

At a more general level, once the societal barriers into academia have been overcome, homosociality (Kanter ,1977; Lewis & Simpson, 2012) may provide a space for subordinated masculinities to transform themselves into dominant masculinities. But as our example also indicates, this transformation requires

integration. To become a speaking subject involves reproducing the dominant discourse, to act according to its rules. This is what we can learn by listening to Foucault:

> Education may well be … the instrument whereby every individual … can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we know that in its distribution … it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it (Foucault 1971,19).

Large numbers of men and women from subordinated classes are prevented from entering the academic system in Spain – and in the EU in general. A few individual working-class men can be accepted into the rooms of power through adaptation. However, women entering in considerable numbers become a serious threat to the gendered power systems. Our societies are based on unequal power relations of class, ethnicity, and gender. The 'glass ceiling' is not only a problem of academia and it blocks not only women, but it is also tied to power relations in society at large and needs to be tackled at that level as well.

ENDNOTES

[1] Ramon Margalef was one of the most prominent Spanish scientists, working at the Institute of Applied Biology (1946–1951), and at the Fisheries Research Institute, which he directed from 1966-1967. In 1967, he became Spain's first professor of ecology.

[2] An example of this is that the men we interviewed saw only one barrier hindering women's full inclusion into academia: that they become mothers. The possibility of them being marginalised was never considered.

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