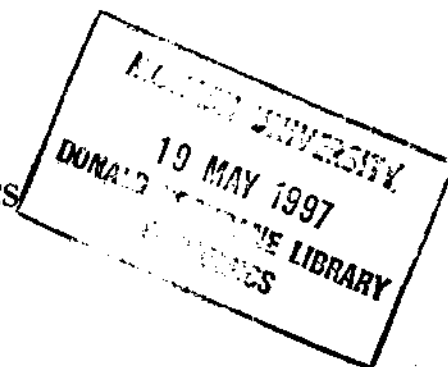


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**SYMBOLISM IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGINS AND ACADEMIC
RELEVANCE OF THE 'BACHELOR'
QUALIFICATION IN A GENDER BALANCED,
MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY**

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ABSTRACT

Research of the origins of the academic title 'Bachelor' establish the word usage in English speaking, western universities ; based on a social status. The proposition is that the term is no longer relevant and acceptable today in our gender- balanced, global, multi-cultural society. Although there has been a significant shift in the perceptions and usage away from gender-based nouns, words evoke strong mental images . This form of subtle gender socialisation should be excluded from education by gender- neutrality.

Education requires symbols of transformational leadership reflecting the present truths; facilitating cultural change relevant to society. Practically, academia has to give considerations to re-generating it's own image in terms which are acceptable to business, employees and society, as well as to the new breed of students from diverse cultures across the world. The literary proposition is that the specific 'Bachelor' title breaches Equal Opportunity legislation and international guidelines on sexual discrimination; also contravening policies introduced by states, companies and educational establishments concerning gender neutrality in literature content.

The research suggests a need for symbolic gender change in the title 'Bachelor', being perceived as discriminatory by students.

This analysis is from an Australian perspective. The research that raises the questions as to the validity of the term 'Bachelor' was conducted here, however, the results have both worldwide implications and applications. It is intended as a discussion topic rather than a scholarly submission.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic language formally communicates the attitudes, values and beliefs of society. The interpretation and documenting of historical, cultural, geographic and legal events constitute our official culture and philosophies [Williams 1989]. Initially, this analysis was simply anthropological, but it is now viewed in terms of recognised research, text books, role models, myths and, increasingly, by the electronic, digital and mass media. The traditional forms of academic representation and documentation are unsatisfactory, lacking the balance of meditative thinking, and raises questions of significance and meaning.

Historically and by tradition, education and training have been the prerogative of the males in the family. The male, once seen as the economic provider, took opportunities and competed for the necessities of life; while the female traditionally conceived and reared the children, looking after the home.

The origin of the term 'Bachelor' relates to the education of the future 'head' of the family at Oxford and Cambridge Universities and took place while they were 'bachelors' before maturing into society.

Ironically, the concept of being expected to be single, especially for girls, before graduating is still prevalent in some cultural groups. Entrance requirements were similar to becoming an army officer; appropriate breeding and finance. Those who were not in the established nobility peerage registers [Foster 1989] signed the enrolment 'sans noblesse'; which became a common derivative phrase, 'snobs'. Graduation was a matter of course, or another person sat the exam for you; an accepted and established practice. The term 'bachelor' can clearly represent a traditional English lifestyle and birthright description; elitist, sexist and spread and compounded by British Universities since the 13th century.

'Bachelor' research shows that the dictionary etymology is uncertain [Barnhart 1988]. At best, it relates to the Latin 'bacca lauri' (laurel berry) and is a pun - 'resting on one's laurels'. Another possible derivation is that the term refers to the French 'bas chevalier', a knight (also male) - knight bachelors were 'Sirs'. Hence we still carry the archaic sur-name (from the paternal side of the lineage). However, today in France the word 'baccalaureate' is the School Leaving Certificate and 'bachelier' is one who has passed the School Leaving Certificate, not a university degree. Perhaps the term refers to the Piers Plowman poem, written in 1376, describing a university graduate. Later, in 1418, the term was used for a junior member of a guild in England. The origins and definition of the term are, therefore, academically debatable for use as descriptive of academic courses and course content, being based on the now illegal sex and race origins of the word.

The essential question is, that given the philosophy and origin of the relevance of language, do all genders and student categories aspire to the degree levels and their current descriptors - 'Bachelors' or 'Masters'?

Culture Reflected In Language And Perception

The historical origins of education have created a significant base of literature written by men, about men and from a male perspective. Is there a need for a philosophical, cultural and linguistic 're-framing'? [Bolman 1991]. A change from his-story symbolised by changing the concept of bachelor days at university. Is this antiquated status symbol perceived as obsolete? More specifically, should symbols such as course titles be reviewed to counter their perceived gender bias?

The language of management education has, as its sources of discontent: stereotyping, social value systems and competition for recognition by those who can afford its services. Can the language of academia and education, use terms such as the 'age of man'? Some linguists will argue the 'natural undisputed evolution' of 'God the Father' and speak of the 'destiny of man'. Is there a place for thought and language like this in 1997?

"People interpret messages received by their senses or created in their minds. Their subsequent actions will be affected in some way by their interpretations of these messages" [Goldstein and Yeh 1996, p 1996]. According to Weick [1995], external messages, particularly when they are ambiguous, ill-defined, or intricate, have to be cognitively re-created before they can be interpreted; the combined process of cognitive creation and interpretation he calls 'sensemaking'. This framing of confusion creates reality. This creation of reality moulds our culture. We must open ourselves to a new sensibility, a new framing that will engender global ideals of equity and gender neutrality.

Contemporary literature appears to frequently use male designated words in a neutral sense, because the female version does not seem to fit. For example - craftsmanship, manhandle. The use of the term 'Bachelor's Degree', along with 'master' and 'workmanlike' is also noted by Smith [1985].

Even a bachelor girl requires the word 'girl' and implies a single status; not all students are single and this brings into question trade descriptions concerning product and service use. We still relate to residual, no longer acceptable, gender expectations based on learned role modelling that compares girls (submissive and housebound) to boys (aggressive, opportunistic leaders and breadwinners).

Across the globe, women are frequently still said to 'marry into' families. This is compounded by all males being referred to as 'Mr', but women still being inadequately defined with some respect to their relationship to men, that is, as 'Miss' or 'Mrs'. Thus females were the seemingly 'ignored' half of the population until the introduction of the (still unsatisfactory) distinguishing titles. Today, in the very real world of defacto relationships, divorce, single families and gender equality, there is little to be said for the titles women have been allocated.

The common use of male gender terms is still firmly reinforced by phrases such as "man-sized tissues". The comparison of male / female terms fails the test [Faroquia 1995], and major forms of sexism, invisibility, dependence and stereotyping are fundamentally still in existence. Sinclair [1995] states that gender neutrality in the management curriculum should discourage generalities across gender. This includes generalities about women. We have grown 'gender blind' because of the male oriented linguistic, historical environment.

As to whether the male orientated origins themselves constitute a gender bias today is probably a matter of personal perception. Students taking Bachelor degrees are neither male 'bachelors' nor female 'bachelor girls'. They are often married women and men with their bachelor days behind them. The term 'spinster' does not fit as it has other connotations that render it inapplicable.

We can see that terms such as 'Bachelor' are not relevant today in a multi-cultural global market world - definitive, translatable terms are now becoming essential. Assumptions and variations must be clearly stated. The language of academia is increasingly demanding, inclusive and relevant.

There is a common recognition of the need for accuracy within educational language. This acknowledgment takes into account attitudes, values and beliefs for future study. Indeed, a significant amount of academic study is necessary in the interpretation and documentation of historical, geographic, economic and legal events. It is the result of this study that constitutes our official culture and philosophies.

Power, Management And Law

The reality is that while conspicuous sexual harassment has declined, the concept of the unconscious use of male 'power' is still prevalent. The bases of power are: reward, punishment, law, expertise and opportunity. These are all reflected in education and employment, not dependency. Gender relating to perceptions of power are relevant. But action, not just philosophy, is essential - bargaining for assertiveness and symbolism.

In practical terms, legislation states that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of: sex, religion, politics, marital status or nationality. This is expanded into work situations: recruitment, training, advertising and employment applications (Sex Discrimination Act 1984). In terms of education this is usually in the form of policies eliminating discrimination and promotion of affirmative action to promote equal representation of men and women. Legally, this translates to equal opportunity checklists for classroom practice and subject course development. Specifically, "to ensure avoidance of either explicit or implicit bias in documents including gender related issues in the aims of content and presentation" [Fastenau 1994, p 2]. For instance, management theory rarely includes the role of women in management, and is generally written by men from a male perspective [Sinclair 1992]. Few leadership case studies or role models exist focusing on (or even mentioning) women and therefore the language of emerging teaching literature is crucial in setting a balanced gender environment.

Greer [1970], inspired women to question philosophies and assumptions, but their roles, after twenty five years on the 'Daring Liberation', are still struggling. Internationally, the United Nations World Conference on Women in China (1995) was hosted in a hostile environment [Harford 1996]. The term 'universal' as it applies to women's rights has also recently (1993) been accepted as relevant to both genders. Iran and Malta are still arguing that the term 'gender' is not appropriate; it indicates a biological reference. They strongly affirm that 'equitably distributed' cannot possibly be regarded as the same as 'equally distributed' because, as they see it, "men do most of the work".

Are men different to women in terms of power and the economics of employment? Equal pay for equal work? Some research confirms that, for example, males are more aggressive; women are more intuitive. Social aspects are also relevant. Are women to be considered a separate, cross-cultural group? The central issue here is that men and women are still represented differently in language and employment. And how will we measure our new performance? The traditional statistical method of analysing results and the use of percentages does not seem appropriate in the 'gender balance' and 'gender equity' debate. For example, a 50/50 enrolment of men and women in a course does not necessarily imply equity, as a 90/10 enrolment figure does not imply a lack of equity. It is not possible to measure gender neutrality in terms of equally distributed gender percentages in course enrolments. This is not a clear indicator of equal balance and is certainly no

indicator of equity of merit for all applicants (regardless of sex). We will need to assess existing measures of cultural and social performance and set firm, proud benchmarks.

Philosophy, Literature And Education

In almost all societies men have recorded the deeds and events of their time. Men researched other men in patriarchal societies and concluded that it was socially representative. Though research was socially based and focussed, the history and philosophy of man required a critical and reflective attitude to these voices and beliefs [Randall and Buchler, 1954, p. 3].

The duty of philosophy is to reorganise and reinterpret for critical intellectual consideration. Philosophy is therefore fundamental to educational and intellectual change and can be viewed from rational and empirical foundations.

Descartes [1596-1650] pondered whether all he had heard 'a priori' was true. Conversely, Kant [1724-1804] had a more sceptical attitude, realising that past experiences do not necessarily mean fundamental truths. Is this the time for change of gender in literature? [Cottingham 1986]

The historical origins of education have created a significant base of literature written by men, about men and from a male perspective. Is there a need for a philosophical, cultural and linguistic 're-framing'? [Bolman 1991]. A change from his-story symbolised by changing the concept of bachelor days at university. Is this antiquated status symbol perceived as obsolete? More specifically, should symbols such as course titles be reviewed to counter their perceived gender bias?

The importance of language and knowledge is discussed by Bergson [1859-1941]. Some knowledge is symbolic; an instrument mediating between meaning and concept. These are not absolute truths but a translation. Truth is an interpretation of knowledge; psychological, literal, often both. This creates the need for definitions acceptable to the ethos of language, culture and knowledge for educational and social use. Where, then, are the origin and definition for the term 'Bachelor' in educational qualifications? [Randall and Buchler 1954, p. 105]

Does our language reflect our culture? For international students attempting to understand Australian and western qualifications, the description does not culturally translate with ease. This gender equity must be clearly visible - and we, in education, again have a chance to demonstrate symbolic leadership.

Cross-culturally, management education has transcended the continents and become international. The practices involved are international in origin and encompass all people, religions and genders. This cultural evolution reflects itself in terms of equal opportunity policies, and specifically in university gender and education policies. Forward thinking universities have developed policies and guidelines for practicable, apparently equal, application of gender terms for example, within case studies and also in respect to the use and misuse of 'invisible' gender bias.

The International Union of Students [1995, p 147] recognises that:

"Language is a great deal more than a means of communication. It has a political significance which cannot be ignored. A male dominated language serves the interest of a male dominated society and sexist language is political in the sense that 'male' is normal: 'female' is a derivative of male. When we use 'man', we are assuming that women do not exist or are lesser beings. This is a form of gender inequity. It exercises subtle (or

seemingly invisible) male power. Sexual harassment is not only physical, and the uncertainty created by use of the generic term 'man', without also mentioning 'woman' can be denigrating to the female sex".

The question is, therefore, whether there is a perception that the use of the title 'Bachelor' for courses is gender biased, discriminatory and contrary to universities own educational language policies.

Professor Still states that there is an "invisibility of the equity issue in practice and that this is condoned by educators. This is supported by prevailing paradigms of successful people in literature; maintained through institutional arrangements" [1993, p 1]. Is this the case with the title 'Bachelor'? Is this a type of socialisation externalising itself in the discriminatory institutionalisation of gender blindness?

Gender inclusive curriculum has been described as one which "treats the knowledge and experience of women as being just as valid and relevant as the knowledge and experience of men in mainstream academic discourse. It is thus more complete, at the same time being more relevant to women" [Sinclair, 1995]. "A gender-inclusive curriculum is judged both on its content and its presentation, including teaching methods and how language is used". [Fastenau and Webber, 1996]. Gender awareness and inclusion within courses are not yet universal, nor is it comprehensive.

What are the real, tangible differences you will see in new education literature? There will be more references to women achieving. When there is a reference to a board, the board will consist of an even number of males and females. There will be gender neutrality. Symbolism will therefore translate via transformational leadership.

Specifically in the case of Monash University, Australia, there is an express policy to eliminate unjust direct and indirect discrimination and other factors contributing to the absence of sexual harassment in employment and education. This is a question of perception.

Legal and political equity has progressed from the United Nations Women's Action Committee [1970] for equal pay, through paid maternity leave and International Women's year [1975]. Bagnell [1994] states that women have a 20% difference in wage package, and 40% difference in company car. Sinclair [1995] reveals women are 42% of the labour force and only 25% in management.

To date, despite the rhetoric of equal opportunity, nationally and internationally, little has changed.

Statistical Research

Not only is there a philosophical, linguistic, legal and cultural base from which to promote the argument that our language must be gender neutral and equitable, research shows that the term is obsolescent. We are at a stage where bias is no longer tolerable.

To test this issue a pilot questionnaire was initially distributed to first year business management undergraduates [Townsend, 1993/4/5/6]. The gender balanced pilot survey (50-52% female) concluded that language and culture are related. In addition, the questionnaire revealed that the term 'Bachelor' is widely perceived as being both a 'single male' and a 'course title'. Nearly 50% of the sample found the term 'discriminatory'. Of the total sample, 70% would find the term 'Monash University Degree of Arts / Business' etc acceptable but some 90% would certainly like the name changed to exclude 'Bachelor'. An improved survey, on the same sample of new students in

Business Studies, obtained statistics that demonstrated an increasing trend in students' perception of the term as discriminatory. The figures moved from 39% in 1994 to 41% in 1995, and then to 52% in 1996. Similarly, the approval of a name change to 'Degree' increased from 70% in 1994 to 72% in 1995 back to 69% in 1996 - not statistically significant.

Post-graduate level statistics are less clear due to a lower percentage of graduate female students, however 30% currently find the term 'Bachelor' discriminatory.

Looking towards our cross-cultural future, in Australia over 100,000 people speak more than one language; there are over 120 languages including Asian and Aboriginal languages [Clive, M. 1991 pers. comm.]. In addition, over 20% of people in Australia use another 'community language', for example dialect or Auslan sign language.

Culturally, research shows that differences and beliefs impact on speech and communication. This creates social conditioning with distinct patterns of communication and influential motives. Men and women do speak different languages [Smith 1985]. Language is a variable in social structure for example, race, nationality and status. Socio-economic status (own home, money, pension etc) appears to follow the norm.

In graduate schools of business, the percentage of female enrolment is increasing, but is well short of being truly representative. The removal of barriers, real and invisible, political, economic, structural and perceptive is required.

Career women are often restrained by a 'glass ceiling'. That is, despite women having clearly demonstrated abilities, the opportunity for career progression does not seem to reach the same levels of opportunity as their male counterparts. In a survey of 43 companies, only 7 females held senior management positions [Rowe, 1994]. Fifty-two per cent of women state they have experienced sexual harassment [Stone, 1995], and the pressure of male 'power / authority' by males (both staff and co-students). They claim to have experienced pressure through the use of such terminologies as 'Bachelor'. Certainly, to advertise for a 'bachelor' to fulfill a vacancy could cause problems.

Nineteen eighty-three saw the first female chief judge of the Family Court. Nineteen eighty-four saw the Sex Discrimination Act but not until 1990 did the United Nations Convention of 'Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women' evolve.

Further realities are that in terms of education, the gender balance of enrolments is nearly equal at lower levels, but unfortunately numbers of women in higher education and higher management roles are significantly less, and they earn less.

In practical terms, this reflects itself with proportionally more women self-employed in their own businesses. "Many women are joining the ranks of small businesses as owners and operators because they have hit the 'glass ceiling' in larger organisations" [Karpin 1995, p. 10]. This is also philosophy, a central accumulation of beliefs, going beyond the purely financial, family, job stereotype work. For example, women clearly have less ability to pay off the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) pay-as-you-earn fees. (One in 4 women are still paying off HECS at age 65, compared to only 1 in 25 men are paying off their fees.) This means encouraging female post-graduate students through expectations, removal of barriers and a strengthening of support.

Table 1: Gender-Inclusiveness of Subjects*

	CSU Pers.Mgmt	CSU Mgmt.Th.	Deakin HRM	Deakin Org. Beh	Monash HRM	Monash Org.Beh.	Monash Mgmt.Th
Gender issues in mgmt. & business dealt with as party of mainstream intellectual content of discipline	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Gender differences are acknowledged & explored	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Both women & men are cited as examples when exploring soundness of theories & theses	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Men and Women are not stereotyped	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a
Achievements of both women & men in business & mgmt are referred to	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Women are referred to in subject titles, language used, and content of subject	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Readings which explore women & women's experience are assigned	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Encourage students to think about how our thinking has been shaped by male perspective	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Use gender-neutral language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Fastenau and Webber, 1996.

* Based on checklist in Sinclair 1995:1

CONCLUSION

This is a significant time for management education and literature. 'Bachelor' days are no longer relevant. By implication, it is time for a new, more balanced symbol of academic achievement.

The essence of linguistics is that grammatical structure reflect the properties of the intellectual mind. The feature of this structure relates to ideas and because common notions translate eventually into the 'real thing', this is a question of perception and definition; a representation, an image, and eventually a symbol. A piece of frozen music creates an environment and sets the aura of the stage. Ideas can therefore become objects [Locke 1690]. It is time for a new idea; time for a new symbol of equity that crosses cultures and unites education.

We rely on our cultural beliefs to guide us. We institute these after we have exhausted the empirical research that constitutes our knowledge base for decision. In real, practical terms, these factors contribute to the perceptions and evaluation of employment status in society. It is time for a change in philosophy - time to lay solid foundations for a new set of cultural beliefs.

We must envisage universities as sites where we can aim at a pedagogy of liberation - an evolving, representative consciousness. A freedom from irrelevant ties, based on English gender, expressed in the form of declarations of independence, Republicanism or educational literature symbolism

Integrating the concepts of future management education, culture and philosophy, the official symbol, the title 'Bachelor', represents an academic course title, not only content. It is still a male derived icon awarded to females having achieved equal intellectual tasks. This needs intellectual, critical re-appraisal. Simply, the term 'Bachelor' is still a life-style description, an outdated role model and not representative of academic status; gender word role reversal demonstrates this.

It is possible that we may need to strive for more than just equal application of gender terms, or gender neutrality. Is this even-handed distribution of existing gender specific terms adequate? Perhaps it is time for the creation of new non-gender specific words; time for the creation of new replacement terms. Time for the rapid evolution of language based on a swiftly developing new world philosophy. Time for universities to boldly announce that the term 'Bachelor' is obsolete in educational terms. Time to award a new title, like 'Degree', with the same accreditation. Time to move toward true recognition of female achievement, value and culture as education approaches the millennium.

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