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Networking as an Organisational and Structural Barrier for Women: A Systematic Literature Review (1985-2021)

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the literature on women and networking between 1985 and 2021 to explore what is known about networking and its effect on women, and what new research is needed on networking. The authors analysed a total of 78 articles published in *women and gender studies journals*. Thematic analysis and three-tier coding have been used in analysing available articles. Findings reveal that organisational cultures did not change during the four decades of research as boys' clubs still exist and take men ahead much more than women's networks take women ahead. Old boys' clubs remain persistent and more powerful than women's networks and women do not report benefits from networking even when they engage with this, often-seen, masculine practice. Women also report exclusion from important professional networks and this is a theme that consistently runs through research, and additionally, many women cannot join networks due to the social expectation that women will look after families.

Keywords: women, networking, systematic literature review, old boys' clubs, barriers, thematic analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been known for a long time that networking is part of organisational work and that employees advance through networking. Some research studies have already pointed in the direction that networking disadvantages women and thus, presents a masculine practice. For example, Saval (2015) argued that historically, women stayed at home whilst men worked, which led to the situation that organizations function as masculine with long working hours that were set up by men, who historically did not have to look after families and thus developed a work-first attitude. This can be extended to networking which has historically benefited men who were able to stay after work and engage with this practice.

This paper derives from research conducted in mass communication industries, journalism, public relations and advertising, which found issues with women's access to career benefits, in part because of organisational networking. For example, in public relations, women reported sexual advances by clients in out-of-work networking events as well as career barriers for those women with family commitments (Topić, 2021) whilst in advertising, women reported sexual advances by both clients as well as managers, the latter in internal networking events such as holiday celebrations (Topić, 2021a). In journalism, women reported having to be one of the boys and go out with male journalists, engaging in banter and drinking after work to succeed in their careers (Topić & Bruegmann, 2021). Whilst these networking findings were relevant and troubling, they did not derive from networking research but were, instead, something that emerged from data based on a questionnaire asking about the general organisational experiences of women working in three mass communication industries. Therefore, this instigated an interest to continue this research and look into networking as an organisational practice in more depth to explore whether networking can indeed be seen as a masculine practice, whether this important organisational activity has been the subject of feminist research since networking seems to affect women's career progression more than men's, and what new research is needed to fully understand this practice.

Many organisations, particularly in the Western world, have equality policies in place that ban harassment and discrimination and whilst these policies have created employability gains for women who cannot be discriminated against directly anymore, the question remains – based on research findings in mass communication industries we outlined above – whether informal and out-of-work practice such as networking has a potential to create career barriers for women.

Therefore, we embarked on a systematic review of literature on women and networking as published in women and gender studies journals. We were particularly interested in understanding whether networking can be seen as a barrier that particularly affects women, thus meaning that networking constitutes a masculine organisational practice.

In the subsequent part of the paper, we first discuss networking as a masculine and organisational practice, then outline the method for the analysis and then present findings per decade of research, as well as a joint analysis of all decades of research.

2. NETWORKING AS MASCULINE ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

Women's networks have been historically both celebrated as a way to help women get ahead, as well as criticized for attempting to 'fix women' (Bleijenbergh et al., 2021). In other words, some authors argued that teaching women how to do what men do to get ahead, means that women are not recognized for who they are nor there is a recognition of specific needs women have in their work environment, such as, for example leaving on time to pick up children from school and looking after elderly family members, which has historically been a women's role (Saval, 2015). Some authors also argued that women and minority ethnic groups have less access and the need to invest time into formal networking (Bleijenbergh et al., 2021).

However, what seems to come out of the provisional reading of the literature is that networking seems to be a predominantly masculine activity, which fits into Saval's (2015) argument that "there was never a question that women would be able to move up the company ladder in the way men could, since it remained unfathomable for male executives to place women alongside them in managerial jobs (...) Men were allowed to think of themselves as middle-class so long as women, from their perspective, remained something like the office proletariat" (p. 77-78). For example, in an already mentioned study on women in public relations in England, Topić (2021) reported that many networking activities happen outside of work hours, which causes career barriers for women with family and caring commitments. What is more, some women also reported sexual advances from male clients and having to behave in different ways and mention their partners or husbands to minimise unwanted attention, thus also arguing that women are not always treated equally and seriously even when they do sacrifice their private time to network outside of work.

This work links with organisational studies where authors have been arguing for decades that women work in a masculine environment, and whilst this environment is not necessarily based on biology but a socially constructed gender, it effectively means that anyone perceived as feminine in the way they do their job will struggle to get ahead. For example, Alvesson (1998, 2013) argued that men hold higher positions whilst women hold lower positions because organisations work under culturally masculine patterns and meaning that comes more naturally to men than women, which means that power is bestowed to men by masculine culture. This then also leads to the situation that men hold managerial positions which are seen as an antithesis to women because these roles traditionally require characteristics commonly associated with masculinity, such as aggression in the approach to work, persistence, toughness, determination, etc. Acker (1990) has called this practice an inequality regime and argued that organisations are gendered because organisational structures systematically and structurally disadvantage staff based on a dichotomy of feminine and masculine.

3. METHOD

To conduct a systematic literature review and identify trends in data, we first selected the literature review units. Whilst we were aware that some works may have been published in niche journals covering particular industries and academic areas, we decided to focus on women and gender studies journals to explore to what extent has the networking phenomenon been a subject of interest of feminist and women's studies scholars and what is known about networking. The advantage of this research is that it provides a comprehensive overview of research into networking with a specific focus on women, as well as providing insight into the extent to which feminist scholars have recognised this issue as a form of masculine domination. However, this also presents a limitation because studies on networking published in more specialised journals may have been missed.

We first identified all women and gender journals relevant for the analysis using the Scimago list of journals (<https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=3318>). All general journals on gender and women were considered (not specific journals such as those covering niche areas, e.g. education, focusing on violence, etc.). However, specific journals that were of interest for this research were included (e.g. management field because we are looking at networking as a potential career barrier). This selection criterion resulted in the following journals being selected for the analysis: *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *Feminist Review*, *Women's Studies International Forum*, *Feminist Theory*, *Gender & Society*, *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, *Signs*, *Women Studies Quarterly*, *Feminist Economics*, *Gender in Management: An International Journal* (previously called *Women in Management Review*), *Gender, Work & Organization*, *Feminist Studies*, *Hypatia* and *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*.

The search for articles was conducted using the keyword 'networking' and the search was performed for all journals listed above between March and May 2021. Articles selected for the analysis were those that directly analyse networking as a problem whereas those that only mention networking in the article, and thus appeared in searches because of it, were excluded. Following this selection criteria, a total of 78 articles were accepted for the analysis.

All articles selected for the analysis have been read and analysed. The coding for articles encompassed analysing key findings, highlights of the article, and theories used, and we also took into consideration abstracts, keywords, and locations of research, the latter three helping us situate the research and providing a more meaningful analysis.

The selected articles were originally compiled based on the decades in which they were published, namely 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, 2010-2021. As per Table 1, the highest number of articles was published in the latest period (2010-2021) and the period between 2000 and 2009, meaning that the scholarly interest in women and networking is increasing gradually but given that the total number of qualifying articles is 78, the interest is relatively low and requires further exploration.

Table 1. Articles per decade

DECADE OF PUBLICATION	NUMBER OF ARTICLES
1985-1989	4
1990-1999	9
2000-2009	27
2010-2021	38
Total	78

Source: author of the article

The data was analysed firstly by decades, 2010-2021, 2000-2009, and 1985-1999. The original intention was to analyse the periods of the 1980s and 1990s separately, however, since the number of articles in both periods is low and some publications from the early 1990s had data collection occurring during the 1980s it made sense to put these two decades together, thus analysing data across three periods.

The data has been analysed by reading each article and each finding, coding for the most important arguments from each article, and writing notes. Codes were then developed from each article.

The codes were developed in groups of articles analysed per decade and the data was continually compared and contrasted throughout the coding process (Straus & Corbin, 1990). The coding was done following the process proposed by Morsing and Richards (2002), which means that triple coding was conducted,

- a) Open coding – included identifying critical themes that emerged from each decade. This process enabled the comparison and contrasting of data, and this then led to the successful categorisation of codes;
- b) Axial coding – included exploring the context in each decade and contrasting it with other decades, which then further helped in discovering and analysing recurring themes from each decade;
- c) Selective coding – enabled identifying the most relevant themes across all decades to provide a general thematic analysis in the analysed period.

Thematic analysis was carried out on each analysed decade of research and a final thematic analysis was conducted afterwards. Thematic analysis is defined as “a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning; coding and classifying data, usually textual, according to themes; and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles” (Lapadat 2010, p. 926). This method is not linked to any particular theory and serves as a sense-making approach that helps in reducing large data sets and findings trends (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that emerge from data as well as trends in knowledge, which means that thematic analysis is more about identifying trends rather than building theories. Thematic analysis is also a qualitative method not meant to generalise findings or provide any commentary regarding validity or reliability, the latter being inherent to positivist and quantitative research. Instead, thematic analysis is a more systematic qualitative method, particularly useful for large datasets such as literature review units (78 in the case of this paper) or large numbers/very long qualitative interviews.

This approach was useful for this research due to the fact it required reading and analysing 78 articles, which can be seen as a large dataset. The method then helped in identifying recurring themes through careful coding. A guide introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed in the analysis, which means that we read data several times and then performed a three-tier coding process as explained above, and the data is presented in visualised thematic figures and using direct quotes to illustrate findings (as per usual practice in thematic analysis).

The main research questions of this research study were,

- Are women and gender journals engaged in research into networking?
- What are the main trends in scholarship on women and networking?
- What research gap can be identified in the literature on women and networking?

4. FINDINGS

The first finding that emerges from this research is that many women and gender journals did not publish qualifying papers on networking, namely *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, *Signs*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Feminist Studies*, and *Hypatia*. The largest number of articles on networking has been published in *Gender in Management: An International Journal* (including *Women in Management Review* as a precursor to *Gender in Management*), *Women's Studies International Forum*, and *Gender, Work & Organization* (table 2).

Table 2. Articles per journal

JOURNAL NAME	NUMBER OF ARTICLES ON NETWORKING
Gender in Management: An International Journal (including with a previous name of Women in Management Review)	24
Women's Studies International Forum	18
Gender, Work & Organization	9
International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship	6
European Journal of Women Studies	5
Feminist Theory	5
Gender & Society	4
Feminist Review	3
Feminist Economics	3
Journal of Gender Studies	1
Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies	0
Signs	0
Women Studies Quarterly	0
Feminist Studies	0
Hypatia	0

Source: author of the article

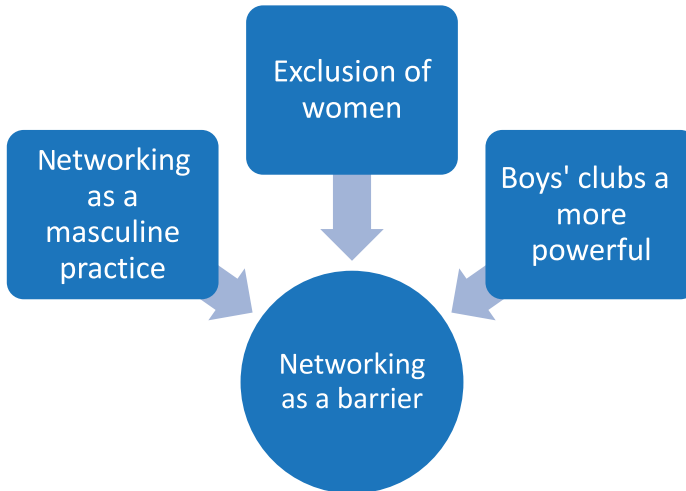
It seems, therefore, that there is a general lack of interest among women and gender scholars on networking as a woman's or gendered issue, with the number of publications in four decades of research being 78. What appears too is that journals more centred on organisational and managerial affairs published more works on women and networking as opposed to traditional women and feminist journals, which is quite peculiar given that much work has been done on issues faced by working mothers in workforces globally. However, this finding in itself warrants further research into networking with a specific focus on the distinctive position of women and the impact networking has on women in terms of career advancement as well as a barrier towards career progress due to social expectations that women will care after families.

Findings from analysed articles, however, reveal similar trends throughout four decades of analysed research, thus scholars reporting women's face exclusion and the persistence of old boys' clubs, which did not lose power. The findings are firstly presented per each decade starting with 1985-1999, and then a final analysis of all four decades of research is presented.

1985-1999

As per the figure 1, in this initial period, not much work has been done. However, main themes emerge and the research generally follows similar or recurring arguments: the central theme that runs through works in these periods is networking as a barrier towards women's advancement, and sub-themes include networking as a masculine practice, exclusion of women and boys' clubs that still exist and are more powerful than women's networks.

Figure 1. Thematic Analysis (1985-1999)



Source: author of the article

According to available research, during the 1980s and 1990s, networking was seen as a barrier for women in the sense that it constituted a masculine practice where women faced exclusion from what was predominantly a boys club. These boys' clubs were more powerful even when women did try to network to advance their career prospects. For example, Rose (1989) analysed networking in the US context and argued that boys' clubs are still powerful and that men are not responsive to their women colleagues. Thus, women were often excluded from these influential networks where invitations were made through invites to informal activities such as sporting events or poker games. The author also argued that exclusion from professional networks has serious consequences for careers. Rose's (1989) study was conducted in the context of biology faculty and the author argued that women are missing out on information that helps with career development and also fail to establish a reputation. Similarly, in the Australian context, Ehrich (1994) argued that networking and mentoring are traditionally male-dominated areas and thus it is more difficult for women to access these opportunities as well as use them to increase their power once they access them. Both of these studies are conducted in educational settings, but some studies showed that women mostly seek to network on a personal level and with people they already know (Travers et al., 1997), and where they can build relationships more easily.

However, scholars still called for women's networking emphasizing benefits such as learning new skills, obtaining support, training, etc. For example, Paul (1985) argued that networks have many benefits such as broadening women's horizons in understanding who does what and what jobs are

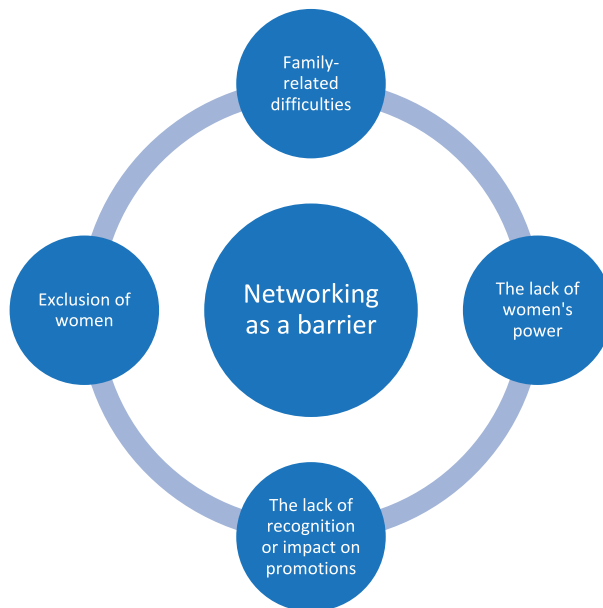
available, with the author acknowledging that networks are male clubs but still calling for women to try to join. Paul (1985) also emphasised that in-company networks have benefits for women as they can help them succeed at managerial levels.

Nevertheless, as research conducted in periods from 2000 to 2009 and 2010 to 2021 shows, while some improvements have happened, the situation has not changed much and women still face exclusions and socially conditioned issues that impede their career progress. This leads to the next analysed decade, where similar findings have also been found in scholarly research.

2000 – 2009

As per figure 2, in this decade of research networking was mainly recognised as a barrier for women, which is a theme that runs throughout the analysed articles as the main one. The sub-themes include the exclusion of women, family-related difficulties, the lack of women's power, and the lack of recognition or their impact on promotions. Thus, it does not appear as if much has changed in reported scholarship in comparison to the two decades of research (albeit not extensive) analysed in the previous section.

Figure 2. Thematic Analysis (2000-2009)



Source: author of the article

In other words, in this period networking was first seen as a barrier for women and this runs at several levels. Women are first and foremost seen as often excluded from networking opportunities. For example, McGuire (2002) argued that Black and white women are tokenised and - even when they have control of organisational resources and good contacts with powerful organisational members -

they receive less organisational support than white men, which the author linked to cultural beliefs according to which men are more valuable as an investment than women. The research also shows that even when women are not excluded they face barriers because of social expectations that women will look after families. For example, in a study by Tonge (2008), women identified more barriers than men to networking and those women-identified barriers included also family and the lack of time due to the dual role women play.

However, what is most problematic in identified research is that women lack power in two ways. Firstly, there are not enough women in power to enable meaningful networking, which presents a barrier in itself; secondly, even when women do form networks and try to network and go ahead, these networks suffer from a lack of recognition. For example, Ogden et al. (2006) argued that women in the UK face more barriers in the industry especially because of networking and the long-hour culture, which then leads some women to exclude themselves from working in certain industries or aspects of a certain industry, such as corporate banking. Similarly, van Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere, and Schouten (2006) argued that women engage in both formal and informal networking to a larger extent than men but the link between participating in networking and career satisfaction is still stronger for men than women, thus showing that networking constitutes a practice that predominantly benefits men. What was interesting about this study is that previous studies have shown that men engage with networking more than women, whereas this study found the opposite but little benefit to women. Authors thus argued that “men were able to use their networking activities more effectively (i.e. showing more career satisfaction) than women”, which led authors to argue that “perhaps men were motivated to use their networking instrumentally to achieve career goals” (van Emmerik et al., 2006, p. 62). Authors suggested that more competency development is needed for women as networking is seen as even more beneficial than mentoring, for example.

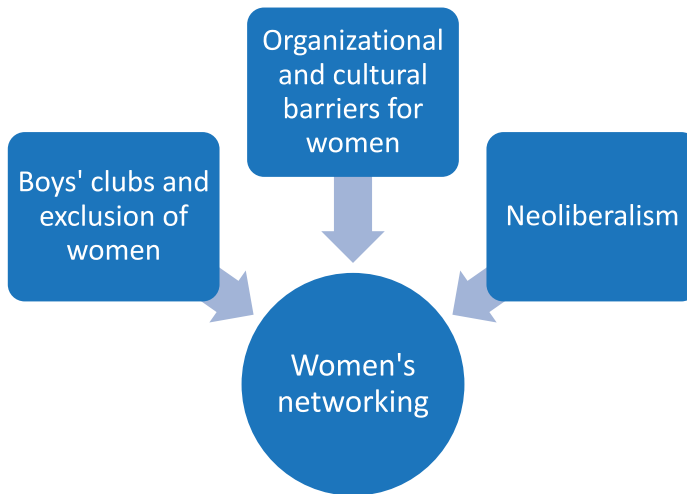
Secondly, networking for women does not always impact promotions and despite trying to network, many women are left behind. In a study by Tonge (2008), women in the UK's public relations identified 17 barriers to networking whereas men identified seven. This study, therefore, suggested that “some younger women were excluded from participating in key networks traditionally composed of individuals who held power in the organization” (Tonge, 2008, p. 500) and women from this study did not recognise discrimination linked to their gender but argued it is their lower position in the organisation. Some of the barriers women identified included social barriers and time and family responsibilities: however, these findings also indicated that women network more than men, albeit benefit less - which is similar to van Emmerik, Geschiere, and Schouten's study (2006) showing that women suffer discriminatory positions even if they try to engage in masculine practices such as networking.

In this period, some works also analysed historical women's networks linking them to activist causes such as Suffragettes (Whitehead & Tretheway, 2008), pro-abortion networks (No author, 2007), domestic violence (Zhang, 2009), and similar. These works provided an interesting overview of how women historically networked to instigate change in their status, and this is linked to some work that has continued in the final period of the analysis.

2010-2021

In this period, in the literature, the research has shifted towards looking at women's networking by forming women's networks and not merely analysing whether women network and how. In that, the sub-themes include boys' clubs and structural and organisational barriers, the benefits of women's networking, and neoliberalism (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Thematic Analysis (2010-2021)



Source: author of the article

The literature in this period focuses on women's networking and its benefits as well as barriers women face in networking with a few works also discussing neoliberalism that emerges as a theme from those papers that analyse it directly - but also as an underlying assumption from other works that discuss barriers women face such as individualism and masculine culture. In this period, scholars mainly debated the effect boys' clubs had on women and how men excluded women from networking opportunities. Durbin (2011) argued that the persistence of old boys networks is affecting senior women. In that, Durbin (2011) argued that not all networks are open to senior women and this also includes those who manage as men do. This is linked to masculinities in organisations and the fact that whilst masculine women generally go ahead, in some industries they also face a catch-22 and cannot succeed even if they do embrace masculine leadership styles. Topić (2020, 2023) found this in her study on women in public relations in England, where women reported that they cannot progress if they do not manage like men, but when they demonstrate masculine characteristics and manage as men do then they are considered as too tough and sometimes called 'bitches'.

Unsurprisingly, what also emerges from the literature is that women do not just face organisational barriers, but also cultural and societal barriers such as family obligations. For example, D'Exelle and Holvoet (2011) argued that women are segregated from women in regards to their networks, which is linked to the gendered division of labour and the fact women have less time to network due to family commitments. The mentioned study was performed in the Nigerian context; however, gender segregation is also present as a finding in other studies. For example, in a Swedish study, Forsberg Kankkunen (2013) argued that networking success is linked to gender segregation, which means that there is a difference in how networks work in female-dominated industries (as opposed to male-dominated industries) and thus there is a notable difference in how networking works in different hierarchies. Equally, in a Sri Lankan study, Hapugoda, Kankanammge, and Shresha (2018) found that women suffer because of the dual role they have in jobs and families and this affects their entrepreneurial networking and causes stress (for more on societal barriers women face, see also Socratous, 2018). This links with a consensus in the literature according to which women have historically suffered from an expectation that they will look after families, which then impedes their career progress (Saval, 2015).

However, some studies point towards different ways of networking that can be beneficial for women and address the lack of time to attend after-work events, such as women's reading clubs that happen during working hours. For example, in a study by Macoun and Miller (2014), authors argue that in a neoliberal university setting, networking is crucial for surviving in academia. With feminist scholarship facing institutional pressures and declining, authors argue that these informal networks are crucial for survival and career progression and feminist reading groups have provided "the opportunity to experience and practice alternative ways of performing academia" (p. 298). The authors argued that the academic culture became "stereotypically masculine" and encouraged traits such as competitiveness whereas reading groups enabled participants to support each other in a feminist environment. One participant in the study spoke of the benefits of this group and said,

"Outside of my supervisor, when I first began my research at the University I felt very disconnected to the research environment. Discussions about research were combative, and often not very constructive. Once I became involved in the feminist reading group I realized that not all research environments needed to be based on one-upmanship and intellectual bickering. From this group, I received constructive criticism and feedback, grounded in a genuine effort by others to support my research and improve the work" (Macoun & Miller, 2014, p. 298).

A similar finding was also revealed in a study by Alsop (2015) who argued that women's reading groups in the workplace can combat boys' networks and achieve connection and support women need to go ahead: these forms of networking are seen as beneficial because they provide an alternative space to after-work drinking or attending sports events, which is particularly useful for women and some men who are either uninterested in these activities or they find them difficult because they exist in a masculine environment.

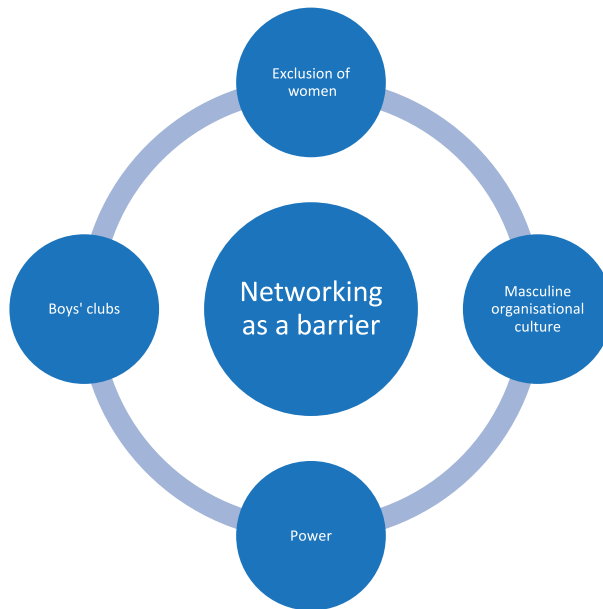
Also, papers analysing how women's networks work show benefits such as emotional support and solidarity, as well as the possibility of using these networks to achieve change from a bottom-up approach, challenging the traditional organisational top-down approach. For example, in a study by Bleijenbergh, Cacace, Falcinelli, del Giorgio and Declich (2021), on Dutch and Italian women networking, authors argued that women networking can create a bottom-up approach and help women advance in their careers by creating pressure and support network that goes up towards the senior management.

Finally, neoliberalism emerged in the literature in this period. Whilst these articles are not the majority, there seems to be a trend of increased recognition of neoliberalism and its impact on women, which has historically resided in Marxist and ecofeminist scholarship. For example, Blackmore (2011) argued that policies such as individual choice and institutional audit regimes are neoliberal; however, these are mainly applicable to men because "while the changing social relations of gender are transforming, familial arrangements and gender subjectivities are reconstituted through social and economic change, the principle of the family remains central to social life, government, and modernization. While the principle of democracy is central to modernization, new forms of governance produce and reproduce old and new modes of exclusion and inclusion. While education is central to the modernization project, its institutional forms and effects alter" (Blackmore, 2011, p. 444). Blackmore (2011) also argued that because of an individualistic worldview "individuals are expected to help themselves build social capital through community-based networks, voluntary, commercial and government, and human capital through education to become independent lifelong learners", however, "a tension exists in education policies between the self-managing reflexive and relational subject who understands and acts on their responsibilities, and neoliberalism's self-maximizing, uncaring homo economicus, which is skewed to some men's advantage" (p. 462).

Final Thematic Analysis (1985-2021)

Following the analysis per each decade of research, a general thematic analysis has been conducted using data from all analysed periods, 1985-1999, 2000-2009, and 2010-2021. As per figure 4, it appears that networking is seen as a barrier for women throughout decades, and runs like a main theme throughout the data. In that, sub-themes reveal the importance of boys' clubs, which has not changed since the early research, the exclusion of women (which is reported throughout decades of research), and masculine organisational culture in which men go ahead and women are left behind because boys' clubs are more powerful and more recognized than women's networks.

Figure 4. A General Thematic Analysis (1985-2021)



Source: author of the article

Therefore, it can be said that whilst more research has been done and there are studies showing the benefits of networking, organisational cultures have not entirely changed as boys' clubs still exist and take men ahead much more than women's networks take women ahead. This leads to the small sub-theme that emerged in the final period (2010-2021) that mentions neoliberalism and how capitalism affects women - in a sense that the founding postulate of capitalism resides in individualism, but with family responsibilities, women have additional pressures that make it harder to succeed and give it all to work. In addition to that, power remains a problem for women and networking, and this issue is not unknown in feminist scholarship. For example, early feminist works have discussed power as a feminist issue because men historically had power over women, thus instigating some authors to see the concept of power as 'power over' and a contradiction in terms (French, 1985, MacKinnon, 1989, Pateman, 1988). What is more, power is directly linked to networking because power can be defined as "the process of the dynamic interaction. To have power means having **access to the network of relations** in which an individual can influence, threaten, or persuade others to do what he wants or what he needs" (French, 1985, p. 509, our emphasis).

Organisations seem to remain entrenched in masculinity and practices that disproportionately benefit men. Networking, as it seems, present one such practice where men – who historically do not have as many caring responsibilities as women – interact with clients and colleagues outside of work and create powerful networks that take them ahead whilst women fall behind. What is more, even when women form network, they seem to be less influential and successful due to differences in women's networking and a lack of women on top to effectively network with, which presents a challenge for women in the organisational world.

5. CONCLUSION

The existing literature, as explained in the findings section, agrees that women face barriers in networking and also that networking in itself presents a barrier for women due to social expectations of women in regards to looking after families and exclusions they face due to persistent character of old boys' clubs. Thus, networking seems to be constituted not just as a masculine practice in the sense that networking often happens outside of working hours, but also seems to be a masculine practice that particularly benefits men. The findings also indicate that even when women engage in networking, this is not as successful because women's groups suffer from an insufficient number of women in senior positions, thus women cannot network with women in power because of their low numbers.

Therefore, there is a need to further explore these barriers, particularly in various industries. For example, some industries are feminised and the majority of the workforce are women, and in some industries, women managed to advance at least to mid-managerial positions. These industries include public relations and fashion, for example, however already cited public relations research in this paper points towards problems in networking for women (Topić, 2021).

Therefore, further research can look into networking within feminised industries and whether networking in these industries benefits women or whether, perhaps, when women are in senior positions, networking is not required as a way to achieve career progress. In addition to that, more sociological and psychological research is needed to explore further why these barriers still exist and what can be done to minimise the pervasive influence of boys' networks. Ultimately, networking is about human behaviour in these social and group settings, which requires sociological and psychological attention.

Finally, studies by Alsop (2015) and Macoun and Miller (2014), which were a part of this analysis, demonstrated that book clubs within working hours help women create bonds, form support groups and thus achieve success by building confidence. Therefore, as a result of this research study, several of the authors of this paper decided to form a book club, first at our University and then online after the book club coordinator and the first author of this paper changed jobs, to further increase our relationships and empower other colleagues invited to the club, with which we also aim to counter the individualistic culture that inevitably exists in Universities (Blackmore, 2011). The book club has been a remarkable success and whilst we hope that this paper can instigate further research, the formation of book clubs and increasing women's solidarity and empowerment would be just as worthy outcome of this research paper.

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Umrežavanje kao organizacijska i strukturalna prepreka za žene: Sustavni pregled literature (1985.–2021.)

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SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad analizira literaturu o ženama i umrežavanju između 1985. i 2021. godine kako bi se istražilo što je poznato o umrežavanju i njegovom učinku na žene te koje su nove istraživačke potrebe vezane uz ovu temu. Autori su analizirali ukupno 78 članaka objavljenih u časopisima koji se bave proučavanjem žena i rodni studija. U analizi dostupnih članaka korišteni su tematska analiza i trostupanjsko kodiranje. Rezultati otkrivaju da se organizacijske kulture nisu promijenile tijekom četiri desetljeća istraživanja, jer „muški klubovi” i dalje postoje i pogoduju muškarcima daleko više no što ženske mreže pogoduju ženama. „Stari muški klubovi” ostaju postojani i snažniji od ženskih mreža, a žene ne prijavljuju koristi od umrežavanja, čak i kada sudjeluju u ovoj, često viđenoj, muškoj praksi. Žene, također, izvještavaju o isključenosti iz važnih profesionalnih mreža, što je tema koja se dosljedno pojavljuje u istraživanjima, a osim toga, mnoge žene se ni ne mogu pridružiti mrežama zbog društvenih očekivanja da će se brinuti o obitelji.

Ključne riječi: žene, umrežavanje, sustavni pregled literature, muški klubovi, prepreke, tematska analiza

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors do not report any conflict of interest.