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Title*: ‘De-gendering medical professionalism and feminised medicine/medical education in the UK: A paradox?’’*

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**Background:** Contrary to popular expectations, a perceived feminisation of work has been associated with a greater gender pay gap and the devaluing of feminised work in the British labour market (Perales, 2010; Walby, 1986; Walby and Olsen, 2003). Furthermore, due to the fact that very little has also changed in the private domain, female professionals, including those in medicine, continue to assume primary responsibility for caring and parenting (McKirsty, 2008; Parsons et al., 2009).

In the last two decades, equal opportunities policy and research in medicine and medical education in the UK have sought the abolition of institutional barriers and discriminatory policies, including the eradication of outdated concepts and practices of medical professionalism (GMC, 2003; RCP, 2005). This literature has raised awareness of gender issues, and highlighted the need for flexible approaches to learning and work in order to increase women’s participation in medical education and in related professions (Proctor and Roberts, 1987; Reed and Buddeberg-Fischer, 2001). Although these initiatives have been positive in encouraging female participation in the medical profession (McKirsty, 2008), there is hardly any evidence to suggest a strong positive impact towards equalising relations of power between women and men in the sector.

Sociological and human resource management research perspectives have been concerned with how current times are disrupting notions of professionalism and what constitutes work and good performance (Davies and Petersen, 2005). Feminist narratology studies have illustrated how the intersections of identities (gender, ethnicity) can inform personal stories, professional experiences and careers and also how they can reveal gender inequalities and challenge dominant paradigms of knowledge and research within a micro-web of emotionality and power relations (Tsouroufli, 2012).

However, discourses of professionalism in medical education research are dominated by concern with the development and assessment of neutral, disembodied, universal and measurable competences. Our paper examines these and their related professionalism frameworks that appear to elide gender and power relations.

**Research explored:** Our critical review aims to explore and critique the absence of gender and power issues in medical education studies of medical professionalism and professional identity within a context of popular discourses of feminisation of medicine and medical education and a ‘female future’ (Leathwood, 2005, p. 387). Our critical review is structured around the following questions:

1. How is the de-gendered medical professional narrated in medical education research?

2. What are the implications for medical education theory, practice and the discipline?

3. What epistemological, ontological and methodological shifts are required to take the medical professionalism movement and research agenda to new avenues?

4. What research questions should we be asking that will have strong positive impact towards equalising relations of power between women and men in the sector?

**Theoretical framework:** This critical review is informed by feminist, management and sociological perspectives on gendered organisations (Acker, 1990), professions (Witz, 1992) and identities (Halford and Leonard, 2006; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004).

**Research methods and data analysis:** At the University of Dundee, we are conducting an online search in the bibliographical databases PubMed, PsycINFO and ERIC for references about medical professionalism and professional identity. The search has included studies conducted in the last 10 years within the UK and internationally. Our critical analysis is embedded in knowledge paradigms of embodied and storied notions of the professional self (Tsouroufli, 2012). Professionalism and professional identities are instantiated in gendered discourses and practices in which power, resistance and emotions are at the centre of understanding self-formation (Foucault, 1977; Ozbilgin et al. 2011, Tsouroufli et al. 2011, Zembylas, 2003).

**Findings/Conclusions:** Preliminary findings suggest that medical professionalism and professional identity in medical education research are conceptualised as disembodied traits and behaviours. Despite an interesting turn recently to professionalism discourses, and identity as comples, gender remains a phantom discourse, and medical professionalism a concept immune to diversity, difference and power (Beagan, 2000; Martimirianakis, 2009).

**Biographical notes**

Maria Tsouroufli: I am an educationalist with an interdisciplinary background in gender studies, health and social studies and medical education. I hold a PhD in Gender and Education from the University of Southampton. I joined the Centre for Medical Education at Dundee in August 2012. Previously I held senior research, and academic positions at the University of Lincoln, Warwick, Cardiff, Norwich Medical School and the University of York. My work examines power issues, exclusion and gender discrimination in educational and organisational contexts locally and globally. I am particularly interested in gendered notions of professionalism, gendered identities in health, medicine and medical education and the development of gender competencies in health and medical professional education.

Irene Malcolm graduated as a linguist, having studied in Glasgow, at the University of Kiel in Germany and at the University of Vienna where she was a State Scholar. She began her teaching career at a school in the east end of London and later worked as a lecturer, senior lecturer and programme director in further and higher education in England. She speaks fluent German and French and was a senior manager in an international training company. In this role, Irene spent a proportion of her time in France and Germany, gaining experience of professional and workplace learning in a range of sectors in the UK and continental Europe. For example, she supervised the delivery of high value professional training at Lloyds of London, 3M and Banc Nationale de Paris. From this post she moved into Scottish Higher Education, working at the School of Education, University of Stirling. She completed her doctoral studies there in 2009 in the area of professional learning and technology, under the supervision of Professor Lydia Plowman. The examining committee for her doctorate was chaired by Professor Francesca Bray, Head of Anthropology, University of Edinburgh. Irene was appointed to the post of Lecturer in Lifelong Learning at Stirling (2006 – 2009) where she completed her academic probation under the supervision of Professor Richard Edwards. In 2009 she took up a post as Lecturer in Education at the University of Dundee, moving to a new post as Lecturer in Medical Education in August 2012.