



+1 Podcast

Season 1: Episode 10

Marina Gertsberg

Medo Pournader:

Hello and welcome to the +1 Podcast, where we discuss diversity and inclusion in our workplaces at the University of Melbourne. I'm your host, Dr Medo Pournader, Senior Lecturer in Management and Marketing at the Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Melbourne.

In this episode, we host Marina Gertsberg, Senior Lecturer in Finance in the Faculty of Business and Economics. I talked to Marina about her work on gender biases in arts industry, as well as in academia. Marina explains her research on male versus female representation in the arts industry and the role of gatekeepers in this industry. She also talks about the impact of the #MeToo movement on junior female versus male academics and their collaborations with more senior academics. This episode was recorded on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

Medo Pournader:

Hello, Marina, how are you?

Marina Gertsberg:

Good. Hi, how are you?

Medo Pournader:

Very well, thank you. Have you had a good week so far?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes, and now it's the end of the week, which is even better.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, Friday, best day of the week, right?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, great to have you here today. I believe that is the first time that we are meeting each other in person, so it's amazing to have you. I'm very excited.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, thanks so much for inviting me.

Medo Pournader:

Cheers. Also, I should say that I was looking at your profile online and the research that you're working on. I'm a big fan of the research that you do and I'm so excited to talk to you about it today. But before we do, I would love for you to talk a little bit about you, about your background, anything that you would like to share with us and with the audience today, and then we'll get to the more serious talk.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, sure. It's a long story. Background is always a long story. I was born in Ukraine, but I grew up in Germany in Dusseldorf. I did my PhD in finance at Maastricht University. That's a little town in the Netherlands. I also had a small stopover as a visiting student at Yale University. And then I was looking for my first job, and that happened to be in Australia in Melbourne. I started at Monash University in 2019 after I finished my PhD. Last year in 2022, I moved to the finance department of Melbourne University.

Medo Pournader:

It's great to have you with us.

Marina Gertsberg:

Thank you.

Medo Pournader:

If you don't mind me asking, what brought you to Australia? I know that overall, the academic market is very competitive, but aside from that, any particular reasons and how you like Melbourne and overall Australia compared to Germany and Netherlands? What is different, what's not?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, I think as you say, the academic job market is very competitive, and I really wanted to stay in academia. At the same time, it was important for me to be in a large city because I like living in large cities. There's a lot...

Medo Pournader:

Me too.

Marina Gertsberg:

... going on, a lot of culture and a lot of material that you can actually use for your research then. A lot of my research was inspired by what I have seen, but I've never been to Australia before moving here, and so I didn't really know what it's like. But I had a flyout, which is how they call the interviews in academia, and I think I walked 40,000 steps in the city on one day because I really wanted to understand, can I live here or not?

Medo Pournader:

40,000, how many hours would that be?

Marina Gertsberg:

It was on the same day, so it was, I don't know, maybe over 10 hours.

Medo Pournader:

Wow, good on you.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, yeah. I first had to see it all and I really liked it. I think if you have never been to Australia and you live in Europe, you actually have a different picture of Melbourne specifically.

Medo Pournader:

How so?

Marina Gertsberg:

I guess you think more of a nice weather and beaches. Well, Melbourne is not bad.

Medo Pournader:

Well, we have a bit of beaches, but it's not... Yeah, I hear you. I cannot argue against Sydney.

Marina Gertsberg:

But at the same time, I'm also not a beach person, so Melbourne was a good fit for me. It has nice coffee shops, good food, some nice museums. In that sense, it was a good fit for me.

Medo Pournader:

I'm glad. I'm glad. I'm on the same page with you on Melbourne weather. I love it because it's cold and then the art scene, the cafe scene obviously, and the dining scene is just absolutely amazing. Now getting into a bit of more serious stuff and the topic that I find fascinating, which is your research, can you tell us a little bit, not a little bit, just start with what your topic is and how you got interested in it, and then we take the conversation from that.

Marina Gertsberg:

My general research interest, the red thread throughout my research agenda is gender bias and evaluations and the role of gatekeepers. How I got into it, my very first project where I started to notice things was when I was in New York and I was working on art auction data of a company and I decided to look at what prices the artworks of female artists sell for at auction compared to the artworks of male artists. And what I saw there was that for a particular type of female artist is that the artworks actually sell for more than those of male artists. At the same time, women are highly underrepresented in the art market. High prices plus very few women suggest that there's some sort of barrier for women that stands in the way of entering the art market.

Medo Pournader:

Okay. If I understood you correctly, and sorry for interrupting. The artwork of these women artists, they're sold with high prices compared to their male counterparts, is that correct? But they were also underrepresented in the market?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes.

Medo Pournader:

Okay, perfect. All right.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly. That is comparable artworks of women's sell for higher prices than comparable artworks of male artists. Yet women make up a very, very small share, 4% more or less, of the art sold in the auction market. What we would expect to see if prices are so high and women are so few, is that there will be more art of women sold until the price comes down to the level of male artworks, yet we don't see more women. Again, that suggests that there is some sort of barrier. In the art market, gatekeepers are quite important. The auction market is actually the secondary market. Before you get to auction as an artist, you typically will be first represented by a gallery, which is the primary art market, and that those galleries or art dealers, they will help you establish your brand. Once you have a brand, your art will have a prize. And typically, only then your artwork will also show up in the secondary auction market.

Medo Pournader:

That's fascinating. I never knew about it. I was always wondering about how does a person become famous in the art world and how does one person not. Apparently, that's the mechanism through which you can make a brand, quote, unquote, right?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah.

Medo Pournader:

Fascinating.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly. Dealers are very important for artists to establish their brand. That is because they have a network of collectors. Of course, if a big collector buys your artwork of a young artist, that is a big mark of approval and that can increase your price. Essentially, that was the first project where I really looked at gender and noticed that, well, gatekeepers are actually really important. If you let women compete with men, they actually can. So, what we have to focus on is really the gatekeeper.

Medo Pournader:

The gatekeepers in this context are those dealers and those art gallery people, basically, that you mentioned that help the artists getting noticed. Is that correct?

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah. Why wouldn't they let women in?

Marina Gertsberg:

There are various reasons. One reason is historically, all the famous artists have been male. So, it may lead dealers to believe that representing a male artist may have a higher payoff than representing a female artist because they may think what collectors want, what they want to pay money for are male artists. So, it is better to bet on male artists because the highest selling artist is I think still Picasso.

Medo Pournader:

Which is a bias, right?

Marina Gertsberg:

To some extent it can be a rational bias. But yeah, it is all very, very complicated if you see that there's superstars in the market, and a very small number of artists generates all the revenue. If you want to find this superstar, you may decide to bet on someone who has the same characteristics as the existing superstars.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, fair enough. And then what happened?

Marina Gertsberg:

And then what happens? I noticed that women can compete against men if you let them, and that gatekeepers are very important and gatekeepers are also important in other contexts. In a different project with my co-author Johanna Mollerstrom and Michaela Pagel, we investigate the gender quota that was imposed in California in 2018 for the board of directors. Just to give a little bit of background, the quota was introduced in California in the US in 2018. And the first step, each public board headquartered in California had to put one female director on their board.

Medo Pournader:

Are we talking about publicly listed companies in California?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes.

Medo Pournader:

Okay, great.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly.

Medo Pournader:

And they needed to have at least one female on their board.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes, which is not much. It's just one woman.

Medo Pournader:

I know. On average, do you know how many people are on the boards of these companies?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, so there are on average eight people. So, one woman is like 12.5%.

Medo Pournader:

I love that. It's very accurate.

Marina Gertsberg:

The stock market to the announcement of this quota was negative, so shareholders reacted negatively. And we observed that also in the context of other quotas, for example, the quota that was introduced in Norway in the 2000s. And the general interpretation of this negative stock price reaction by shareholders is that shareholders oppose the addition of women to boards because they believe that there are not enough qualified women out there who could fill the board position and now boards are forced to replace a good male director with the worse female director. That is the concern, and we challenge that, and we look at how shareholders vote for individual directors in the board of elections before and after the quota. We find that before the quota, new female nominees for the board of directors receive more votes than any other group of nominees in the same election before the quota.

Again, that is very similar to what we've seen in the art market, conditional on women being a nominee such as conditional on women being sold in the art market, they actually fetch higher prices, get more support, and again, it suggests that they're subject to a different standard, a different bar. So, it is more difficult for them to become a nominee in the first place. They have to clear a higher bar. What we observe after the quota, also as the number of female nominees increases because of the quota, we find that the support for new female nominees decreases, as one would expect, as more women come in. But it doesn't fall below the level of new male nominees. And that tells us that shareholders don't oppose female nominees, but there is rather something else. What we find, what could be an alternative explanation for the negative stock price reaction that we observed at the time of the quota announcement, is that when boards add a quota-mandated woman to the board, they don't turn over the least supported existing male director, but someone who's more supported.

Medo Pournader:

Say again, I didn't understand.

Marina Gertsberg:

When boards comply with the quota and add a woman and they turn over an existing male nominee—

Medo Pournader:

Turnover, meaning that a woman comes in, a man goes out.

Marina Gertsberg:

And they remove someone else from the board, an existing male nominee, they don't remove the least popular male director, but someone who's more popular. The reason for that is that boards are oftentimes entrenched or act according to their self-interest and don't act in the interest of

shareholders. For example, it could be that the least popular male director from the shareholder's perspective is a friend of the CEO.

Medo Pournader:

Oh, the politics.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah.

Medo Pournader:

I could imagine there is this whole group dynamics going on, especially on the boards where there is so much at stake, a lot of money, at least money and power.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly. And another thing is, of course, with the quota, the job market prospects for male directors, especially for the bad ones, deteriorate because now boards are incentivized to add female directors, and this is not a good time for a male director, especially someone who's not good at that job, to lose it.

Medo Pournader:

And then they kick out from the board an already board member who is pretty okay, and then that signals the shareholders, and that's why the shareholders react. That's fascinating stuff.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly, yeah. Another important feature of boards is that the current board itself nominates the board members. They nominate the new ones, and they also decide who leaves. So, they have a lot of discretion over the appointment and turnover process. What our research shows is that before the quota, this board held presumably women to a higher standard. And when they're forced to make turnover decisions, they don't make a decision that is in the interest of the shareholders, and this is something that shareholders anticipate. Overall, what we learned is that the negative stock price reaction should not be interpreted as opposition towards female directors.

Medo Pournader:

I assume there is this whole process going on behind the scenes where there are lots of other firms who have intelligence on what's going on, who has gone out, why has this particular person have been picked to get out of the board, to exit from the board. And then that intelligence probably gets to the whales in the market who are investing in these companies. That's top-notch intelligence that they have. And then all I'm saying is that the major shareholders probably know what's happening and that affects their decision.

Marina Gertsberg:

It's institutional shareholders who also hold larger stakes and have quite a lot of power, they're usually well-informed, but still, it is a very black box how those appointment decisions and turnovers work. It's a big challenge. It's still a black box. An interesting avenue for future research to really find out what is going on in boardroom discussions.

Medo Pournader:

While you were talking, I'm not in finance economics, and I don't know how much of the other stuff that you mentioned has been researched or not. But as you mentioned the group dynamics of the board members or why they make the decisions that they make in this context, letting someone go and hiring or just choosing the female new board member that needs to be added to the board. I was like, yeah, new research topic, new research topic, but also the implications are just amazing. California did it. How about Australia? Do you have any insights on that topic? And also, the arts stuff, I don't know if I asked you whether the arts project was also in the U.S. or in Europe or in Australia, but how does Australia measure up or down?

Marina Gertsberg:

Based on what I know, Australia actually has a fairly large share of women on boards, which is good. Australia doesn't have a binding quota. I think there's just, and I may be wrong, I think there's just the directive to have a certain share of women on boards, but Australia, comparatively to other countries, has a fairly large number of women on boards. It doesn't always solve the main problem though because frequently those women... in a sense that it doesn't really add much to diversity because frequently those women who are on boards, they also come from the existing network and they're actually in their characteristics very similar to men. While it is still important to have a critical number of women on boards, if we think about diversity of thought, it's not clear how much that really adds and whether we can really speak of diversity if these people still come from the same networks—

Medo Pournader:

Same demographic background probably.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly.

Medo Pournader:

That is absolutely amazing stuff because we were talking about, me and a group of other colleagues, we were talking about this phenomenon that some companies, when they are very criticized and they have got a male CEO, for example, they oust the CEO, and they appoint a new female CEO. Qantas is one of the most recent examples. I'm thinking of the RBA. After Philip Lowe, we have a new head of RBA who is a female. We were thinking, is that because it signals to the market or signals to the public in the case of RBA, that the female CEO is more caring? I don't know, nurturing, those adjectives that we attribute to women to soften up the blow, to soften up the complaints and the criticism of the entity, Qantas, RBA, any other organization there. That's one thing. Another thing is that, but how much of a difference does it make, as you mentioned? Where is that female coming from? What is the attitude, how different they

are to the previous male CEOs, or in the case of your research, the board member, et cetera, et cetera? I would say not much different maybe.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah. I personally did not do much research myself on CEOs, but it is really interesting to actually... Yeah, those two events that you mentioned, both RBA and Qantas recently appointed female CEOs, and both were in trouble before that. There's one theory that is not from my own research, but other people's research, which is the golden skirt. That is, women tend to be appointed to leadership positions in crisis. And that may be for different reasons.

Medo Pournader:

Or the UK government after Brexit, I think they had Theresa May when things were just in shambles. She was, I think, the prime minister with the shortest duration of prime ministership in the UK, but it was during horrible times in the UK. I was thinking could that be, again, according to that theory that you just mentioned, that they picked her to just soften the blow and then they had Boris Johnson afterwards.

Marina Gertsberg:

It may be, have a woman to blame, but it may be to signal kind of safe reputation and try to distract and appoint a woman and signal, look how great we are. It's a little bit to distract from the crisis. It could be because the companies do believe that women have different attributes that would allow them to manage the crisis better. It is very difficult to study female CEOs because there are so few of them. About five or 6% of CEOs in publicly listed companies are female.

Medo Pournader:

In Australia?

Marina Gertsberg:

I think this number probably also applies to Australia. I think this number is more from the U.S., but there are not very big differences. Therefore, it is very, very difficult to study female CEOs. But there are some studies that show that women are more risk-averse. There are some studies that show that... And for the risk aversion, there's mixed evidence. I would maybe doubt that that is the case for women who become CEOs. There's fairly stable evidence that women are less overconfident than men. But it is difficult to compare female CEOs to male CEOs, really.

Medo Pournader:

Less overconfident or less confident?

Marina Gertsberg:

I would say that what the research shows is less overconfident. So, men tend to be overconfident on average people.

Medo Pournader:

I'm surprised, I'm not. I'm sorry. I apologize to all men listening to this right now, but that's fascinating stuff. So, in Australia, we have females on board, but probably their behavior and style of thinking might not be that different from their male counterparts. Before I ask about the solutions to the gatekeeping, that would basically, as you mentioned, is going to make or break the gender bias in the workplace or in other contexts, are there any areas of research on gender bias or contexts that you have worked on, and you would like to share or are working on, and you would like to share?

Marina Gertsberg:

One very exciting project that I'm working on right now is about the #MeToo movement.

Medo Pournader:

Great.

Marina Gertsberg:

I can talk about that, if you like.

Medo Pournader:

Go for it.

Marina Gertsberg:

Okay. In that project, I look at how the collaborations of junior female economists in academia changed around the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement happened in October 2017 when Alyssa Milano tweeted that she was sexually harassed by Harvey Weinstein, and she encouraged other women to come forward and tell their stories. The intent of this movement was to demonstrate how tolerated sexual harassment is in the workplace, to encourage women to come forward and share their stories publicly where organisations have failed to respond, and also to then punish perpetrators. So, it is viewed as one of the most important recent movements. On the one hand, women should feel more comfortable in a workplace after the movement because they have more support. So, they should feel more comfortable working with men.

On the other hand, anecdotally, men report now that they're concerned about sexual harassment accusations, and they don't know how to behave, really, in the workplace. It is not really clear whether we would expect to see collaborations between women and men to increase or decrease after the movement. And that is what I'm studying. What I find is that after the movement, junior female economists start fewer projects, and that is largely due to fewer new collaborations with male co-authors. That is not the case for junior male. So, I try to disentangle, is it because women or men are backing out? What is happening there? To get to that, I look at the sexual harassment policies that are in place at the university when #MeToo hits, and I look at how specific they are with respect to elaborating on what kind of behaviors are prohibited and what is allowed. So, how specific they are.

The idea is that a more broad policy that doesn't specify what is allowed and what is prohibited exposes men to a larger variety of claims after the #MeToo movement when there is a lot of pressure for organisations to respond. A more specific policy which outlines what kind of behaviors are allowed, and just to give you an example of what a specific policy is. A specific policy might, for example, specify whether you can ask your colleague out on a date, whether you can comment on a colleague's physical appearance, whether you can wear clothes with sexually explicit content. That is something that an explicit policy would comment on, so that the exposure to claims is lower. What I find is that at universities that have a more specific policy, that is where the decline in collaborations between women and men is less pronounced after the movement.

Medo Pournader:

Because it gives you a step-by-step guideline of what is accepted, what's not accepted. But when it's very grey and you don't know what is included, what's not included, you just prefer to keep your distance from that junior colleague, a female junior colleague, if you're a male professor. But that is within colleagues in one university, or does it also apply to cross-university collaborations between male and female?

Marina Gertsberg:

That is a little bit more complicated. The most pronounced decline that I observe is between junior female economists and senior men at the same university. That is, of course, where the risk of sexual harassment and sexual harassment accusations is higher because you work more closely together. The thing with policies is that they usually only apply to the same university. So, one sexual harassment policy applies to the employees of that specific organisation. That is not a cross-organisation. That analysis is really looking at collaborations within the same university. That is also where I observe the largest decline.

Medo Pournader:

How did you get the data, if you don't mind me asking? I know it's the academic nerd inside of me trying to understand how you got access to data.

Marina Gertsberg:

I collect data for junior female economists at the top 100 U.S. economics departments. And I collect historical CVs for all junior economists who were on the tenure track in 2017. So, before the movement hit. It's 83 junior female academics, which is a really small sample, but it is the full population of junior female economists who were on a tenure track at that time. For those women, I collect all of the historical CVs and I extract all working progress, projects, and all working papers to really be as close as possible to the actual initiation start of a project. And then I decompose those collaborations into non-overlapping combinations and start with the total number of projects. And I look at how many of those are only with male co-authors, how many are only with female co-authors, and then mixed.

I use the Wayback Machine to collect historical CVs. That is a website that saves historical versions of websites. I also collect historical sexual harassment policies for all sample universities. And that I do also

using the Wayback Machine. And I also contact, in some cases, the universities to ask them for a historical version of their sexual harassment policy.

Medo Pournader:

That's a great effort. That's fantastic. Thank you for sharing that. I was also thinking about, aside from the policies and those formal guidelines, or if you may, transactional contracts that you have within universities in the broader academic community, at least that is the context that I'm familiar with and I've worked most of my life in, male academics are comfortable to become friends and colleagues and start to work, not necessarily colleagues but co-authors and start to work together. I think that might be even my own personal experience, but I'm keen to hear your thoughts on that. If you go to a conference, a junior female academic versus a junior male academic, which one has it easier to make connections to more senior academics in conferences? Could it be the male junior academic who, because he's male, it's easier for him and also the other male academics find it easier to make connections with him?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, I think there is a lot of research that shows that women have smaller networks and therefore #MeToo is also such an important event. Networks are important to form collaborations. And #MeToo changes the cost of forming collaborations. What my research shows is that exactly that movement increases the cost of forming collaborations between junior women and senior men because both anecdotally... When I talk about this research with both men or women, it is said a lot of senior men actually admit that they're engaging in some risk-mitigating behaviors that may include leaving the door open. And how does it make you feel as a woman if a man leaves the door open with you, but not with the male colleague? On the one hand, it makes you maybe feel more secure, but on the other hand it may also make you feel more like a threat, and you just feel—

Medo Pournader:

That you're a ticking time bomb.

Marina Gertsberg:

Exactly. This is also not a great feeling in my personal view. But then also, men report that they would not go out for dinner with a colleague one on one, they wouldn't go out for a drink. Is this really necessary is also the question? In academia, a lot of ideas are born or discussed in those informal situations. If men continue to have those informal opportunities to discuss ideas in an informal setting, then that can lead to inequality.

Medo Pournader:

No, absolutely. I agree with you, and that's my own personal experience as well. You need to make a bond and trust with your collaborators. If you don't do that, if you're unable to do it, if the trust cannot be established because of these types of issues, if you may, then it's going to be very hard, especially if you're a junior female academic, to go up the hierarchy with respect to networks. I can see, sometimes reflecting on my own academic network, I'm like, the people that I work with are the ones that I enjoy

working with, but also comparing myself with my male counterparts, I can see how easier they can find co-authors and work with, being on the same quality of research.

Not to mention there might be, I'm not saying there is, there might be some prejudgments about female academics' research capabilities versus male academics. If you are a 30-something-year-old female versus a 30-something-year-old male academic, how do people look at you? How do other senior colleagues look at you? Which one is smarter from your perspective? Is it the male academic or is it the female academic? If you are a senior male academic, do you resonate better with the junior male academic or the female? I would say most likely with the male junior academic. And that would subconsciously, I would say, affect which one you prefer to work with.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah. As you say, I think trust is actually an important mechanism here that could explain a lot of things after the #MeToo movement, so yeah.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely.

Marina Gertsberg:

And especially co-author relationships are very, very long. Publishing a paper takes—

Medo Pournader:

Sometimes years.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, five years.

Medo Pournader:

I have heard nine years.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, there is no limit. Trust is really important in those types of collaborations. In academia also, we decide ourselves who we are working with, so if you think as a senior man that women are a threat, because there are so many men, you may easily substitute.

Medo Pournader:

In economics, is there a gender balance in terms of numbers of how many male versus female academics you have in different levels?

Marina Gertsberg:

No, there is definitely no balance. The share of women in economics is roughly 30%, and that is more on assistant professor levels, or a senior lecturer level, but the pipeline is very, very leaky. If you look at full professors, then it is in the lower 20s.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, it goes down.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, and that is also an issue. Senior academics are important because they bring important resources to the table, such as a network or knowing how to pitch a project and having more women at senior ranks would potentially help.

Medo Pournader:

Absolutely. I'm pretty sure it will, it's just a matter of how, and that's what I'm going to ask you. Considering these three projects that you have explained and the role of the gatekeepers in creating or just instigating gender bias, what is the solution? How can those gatekeepers help reduce gender bias? Or are the gatekeepers responsible or have the most impact? Is there another stakeholder or mechanism that can help reduce this gender bias?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, that's a very big body of research that is studying that. I think identifying and holding gatekeepers accountable is important. So, in one study with my co-author, Tristan Botelho, we look at Yelp reviews. That is reviews for restaurants. And we find gender bias in those reviews, namely that when reviewers mention a waitress, so a female server in their reviews, that for the same reviewer, the restaurant rating will be lower than if they're mentioning a male server, so a waiter in their reviews. We also find something that helps. And what helps is when the reviewer has status. That means that they are awarded an elite badge that distinguishes them from other reviewers. It makes them visible, but it also imposes discipline and accountability because your actions are more visible. There may be expectations attached to that role, and you can also lose the status.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, you've got that blue tick.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah. What we observe is that when evaluators or reviewers attain status, that gender bias decreases in review.

Medo Pournader:

That's fascinating. Those reviewers, those stellar reviewers are the gatekeepers, but also being a gatekeeper puts this, not pressure, but makes them feel more responsible in terms of giving more fair reviews, less gender biased. In other contexts, like the corporate boards or in academia, the professors, the board members, in the arts example, the dealers and galleries, don't they feel the same prestigious status to help them reduce the gender bias?

Marina Gertsberg:

Let's, for example, take the context of the board. The directors have definitely, they're highly reputable people, have a lot to lose, but their evaluation is unobservable. We don't see how they evaluate nominees. It's what I was talking about before, that this whole process is still a black box. There's actually even a guideline that they have at least to state who has nominated a certain nominee, but even that they don't really do. So, it's a very, very, very black box. If they would disclose the reason... They disclose the reasons why they nominated someone, but there is no disclosure about who were the candidates, how exactly were they selected. There is no transparency about the process. While there is the status, their evaluations are not really visible.

Medo Pournader:

But in the case of the Yelp reviews, everyone can see what review you have made for others. And then if you are one ranked as one of those blue-ticked reviewers, then you'll definitely be more careful of what you're going to say.

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah. Yes. The discipline that is imposed through the visibility, it could also be just... What we also see is that those elite or those evaluators with status, they also have longer reviews. Also, maybe the process of elaborating on your evaluation, not just giving the five stars, but also describing carefully why you are giving the five stars may also remove the bias if you are forced to really—

Medo Pournader:

So, transparency, if I get you correctly, is one of the mechanisms that one can hold the gatekeeper accountable. Is that correct?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yes.

Medo Pournader:

But we do not have transparency everywhere. We have transparency in Yelp. We do not have transparency in how the board decisions are made. We might not necessarily have transparency. It's a decision that you make as a senior academic to work with someone or not work with someone. You do not have to explain it to anyone. We do not have much transparency there either, as in many other corporate settings for anyone who is listening to this episode. And then the big multimillion-dollar

question would be how do we create transparency in those situations and contexts that are many and people make decisions that do not have to necessarily explain?

Marina Gertsberg:

Yeah, that's a good question. It's tricky in the context of academics having to explain why you work or don't work with someone. I'm not sure that would fly very well in the academic world.

Medo Pournader:

Or even in other corporate settings. Our university is a corporate, but also broader industry and other settings as you have worked on.

Marina Gertsberg:

I think academics, the decisions that we make, who we work with are difficult to hold us accountable for that. What my research shows there, what helps in that context is to just make or design good policies. We had the #MeToo movement, which is really important. It is not that that movement was a bad thing. I think it's very important that this awareness was raised for sexual harassment and its tolerance in the workplace, but the organizations have to support it. They have to support it by designing clear policies and translating what the new expectations on behaviors are.

Medo Pournader:

Yeah, no, I agree with you. That whole policy design and development is, I think, in the big world where in different contexts, in different industries, in different corporates, what policy works, what doesn't. It needs to be really tested. Thank you so much, Marina. This will be my last question that I ask from all our guests. And here it is. How do you think the future looks like?

Marina Gertsberg:

Probably the future looks good.

Medo Pournader:

Cool. I'm glad to hear that.

Marina Gertsberg:

With respect to gender equality, I also think it looks good. There's a lot of awareness. There are a lot of great people doing research on gender equality, a lot of awareness for women's additional roles as childcare, as I think there is awareness about that. Now there's the question of finding what the right policies are to support women in the workplace.

Medo Pournader:

I'm glad to hear that. And fingers crossed, for the future, more improved policies that would reduce gender bias. Marina, thank you so much. Best of luck with your research and we hope to have you again on the podcast.

Marina Gertsberg:

Thank you. Thanks so much for having me. It was a great discussion.

Medo Pournader:

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