

Gender Discrimination Among Students: Are Females More Subject to Social Manipulation than Males?

A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis Among Students from Dutch Universities

Final Report for the Outreaching Honors Program

Tilburg University

June, 2021

Sara Brzeski, Tessa Heijligers, Zainab Karimjee, Paqui van der Mull, Alexandra Ruetten,
Elaha Sayad, Yvonne Schittenhelm, Vivien Zielonka

Supervised by Dr. Åsa Ekvall

Table of contents

1 Introduction	2
1.1 Background and relevance	2
1.2 Literature review	5
1.3 Research Scope	9
1.4 Research question and hypotheses	9
2 Quantitative analysis	11
2.1 Methodology: Survey design and data	11
2.2 Results	15
2.3 Discussion	22
3 Qualitative analysis	25
3.1 Methodology	25
3.2 Results and discussion	26
4 Discussion and concluding remarks	34
4.1 Analysis of findings	34
4.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research	36
4.3 Advise	37
4.4 Overall conclusion	38
5 References	39
Appendix	43

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and relevance

Over time, the position of women in society has improved considerably. For instance, increasingly more women have become part of the labour force in the past 50 years (BLS Reports, 2019). In addition, since the 1960s, the number of women that are enrolled in a higher education program has grown steadily. Today, 51 % of the students in the Dutch higher education are female (Traag, 2020). However, this does not mean that women are treated equally to their male counterparts. When looking at conversations, men are more likely to control them by choosing the topic of the conversation, interrupting, or simply ignoring women when they start to talk (Lakoff, 1995). As a result, women are more likely to act as a submissive agent during the conversation when talking to men. Besides men being more likely to control the topic, interrupt or simply ignore women, other dynamics during the conversation also play a role which disadvantage women in the conversation. The dynamics at play here are referred to as *master suppression techniques*. These techniques are strategies which result in manipulating the communication process by overruling the other person (Ås, 2014). They were first developed by psychologist and philosopher Ingjald Nissen in 1945. In the late 1970s, Berit Ås revisited the topic, reducing them from nine to five master suppression techniques. The master suppression techniques establish a particular hierarchy which disadvantages women. These techniques can broadly be distinguished into five categories, namely: making invisible, ridicule, withholding information, double bind, and heap blame. These categories were expanded in 2003 with the inclusion of two additional suppression techniques: objectifying and threatening to use force (Ås, 2014).

An overview of each master suppression technique with an example of a real life scenario of each technique can be found below in Table 1.

Master Suppression Technique	Real Life Scenario
Making Invisible	Someone takes something someone else mentioned and uses it as if it was his/her idea.

Ridicule	Someone uses expressions to ridicule a person based on stereotypes of their gender. For instance, a person tells a woman. "You are so emotional"
Withholding Information	Someone does not inform a person about an important deadline, even though it concerns them.
Heap Blame	Someone makes a person feel guilty about something, even though it is not their fault.
Objectifying	Someone makes a comment about a person's appearance in a situation where it is irrelevant.
Threat to use force	Someone says: "If you do not shut up, I will get aggressive with you".
Double punishment	Someone takes part in a group discussion in class. Firstly, the teacher criticized the person for being too quiet. When the person speaks up, the teacher says that the person is too dominant in the conversation

Table 1

These master suppression techniques were distilled by Berit Ås, who observed them through conversations that took place in the political realm and at the workplace (Ås, 2014) and most of the research investigating these techniques have also taken place in these spaces. But when does it begin? Barely any research has been done with regard to the use of master suppression techniques in a university setting. The goal of this study is to investigate whether master suppression techniques are already present at the university and if there are differences in the level of social manipulation between genders. This allows us to gain a better understanding of

gender differences in communication. If master suppression techniques are not present at university, there are no gender differences in the use of them. Consequently, this might indicate that gender differences arise at the workplace. If master suppression techniques are already present in a university environment, it gives a better understanding of the specific root of the issue. With a deeper understanding, interventions at an earlier stage can be implemented to ensure that social manipulation across genders is reduced to a lower level. As a university is a place of development and growth, interventions that prevent or make people more aware of the master suppression techniques can also be easier implemented than in the workplace.

This research will contribute to the existing research and literature on gender discrimination. Additionally, it will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the master suppression techniques. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate if, and if so how, gender discrimination is present in conversational settings in the Dutch higher education system. Within the context of the university, conversations take place mainly in class or group settings. University-related settings such as events organised by student associations are also incorporated within the scope of this research. In order to investigate whether gender discrimination is present during conversations, a survey was distributed and qualitative interviews were conducted. Both means seek to answer the following research question:

To what extent do female students enrolled at a Dutch university experience master suppression techniques?

Relevance

Equal treatment within society is still of concern in Western societies, as gender equality is not yet achieved in domains such as work and the allocation of household and childcare tasks. Conversations play a crucial role in the equal opportunities men and women have in these domains. For instance in the work domain women tend to negotiate less for a pay raise than men do, which ultimately leads to a wide gender pay gap. If women were to negotiate and demand for a pay raise, they would experience greater backlash than men, by being labelled as ‘bossy’ or ‘dominant’ (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). A lot of literature has already covered situations in which gender discrimination took place during conversations in the workplace or in the political sphere, but not a lot of research has been undertaken to investigate to what extent this occurs in a

university context. Therefore, this research is important to shed light on gender discrimination among students.

1.2 Literature review

Master suppression techniques

During conversations, female interlocutors are more likely to be oppressed than their male counterparts. The ways oppression takes place can be categorized into five master suppression techniques. These techniques were developed by observing the daily rejection and mockery female politicians faced from male politicians, even those from their own party. In this part, each master suppression technique will be thoroughly explained.

Making Invisible

Making Invisible was initially identified as a technique used to silence a female political opponent by interrupting her or ignoring her presence in general. When faced with this technique, female politicians often contribute to their own silencing as a means to “survive in a hostile environment” (Ås, 2004, p.79). This technique has also been used in other contexts, such as in a university environment. A study done on the effects of gender on interruption among university peers in the United States shows that men and women interrupt each other frequently and almost equally, but in different ways. When women interrupt, they tend to use behavioural patterns such as cooperative overlapping (finishing each other's sentences), minimal response (agreeing with the other speaker's statement) and self-repair (apologizing for interrupting). When men interrupt, they generally do not use these behavioural patterns. At times, men were observed to offer minimal response, but at no occasion did men apologize for an interruption. After being interrupted, both men and women made an effort to reclaim the floor (Stubbs, 2014). This goes in contrast to a study by Zimmerman and West (1975), who observed that women, after being interrupted on multiple occasions, had a tendency to fall silent and not complain about it. Men on the other hand, were more likely to complain about the interruption (p. 123).

Ridicule

To ridicule is to portray the arguments of the other or even the person itself as incompetent due to characteristics attributed to their gender. When this technique was first identified, it was used to describe situations where male politicians attempted to show dominance over female politicians by diminishing their argument or credibility. By using stereotypes, such as being too emotional, they portrayed their opponent as incompetent for that line of work (Center of Gender Equality, 2001).

On a case study focusing on the media representation of the former Argentine President, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, it was shown that the ridicule technique is commonly used in Latin America's political institutions in order to discredit the argument of a female opponent by making it seem ridiculous and inconsequential (Medina, 2019). In addition, the femininity or lack of femininity of female politicians' appearances are often ridiculed in an attempt to diminish their credibility and demonstrate a lack of competence. This technique is also used in combination with other techniques - such as objectify - in order to make its effects more powerful (Medina, 2019).

Withhold Information

Withholding information happens when important information is exchanged by some, without the presence of other individuals who would be interested in such information. This may happen without the intention of exclusion - men talking business in the changing room where women do not have access to - or on purpose - setting up a meeting and purposefully not inviting an individual. This technique is often used in a work environment to get the upper hand and establish a clear hierarchy (Ländin, 2014). Withholding information is also used in politics. Historically, men have controlled the political agenda in the world. In order to maintain power, politicians use this technique to ensure they are the ones making decisions (Medina, 2019).

Double Punishment

Double punishment, in simple words means: "whatever you do, it is wrong" (Center of Gender Equality, 2001). Women often suffer this suppression technique when trying to balance their personal and work life. An example of double punishment would be if a woman is criticized by her family for not spending enough time with them, while being scolded at work for not giving

her all to the company. According to Medina's (2019) case study, double punishment is a technique often used in Latin America to disqualify female politicians no matter what their decision may be. Their private and political lives are constantly compared and criticized in order to make them look unreliable. Kirchner - former Argentine President - at times was called on for being too dependent on her husband. At other times, she was criticized for being "unbearably independent". It has also been observed that female politicians are expected to keep their emotions in check when it comes to their work while, at the same time, are condemned by the media for being too cold and distant if they do not act feminine enough. This type of criticism was never observed when the media spoke of male politicians. The study shows that the problem relies on the gender of the politician, rather than their positioning (Medina, 2019).

Heap Blame

When someone is subjected to the master suppression technique of heap blame, the person is held responsible for something that she is not responsible for. This usually happens when a woman acts differently than a man would in the same situation, when they do not have access to important information held by men or are blamed for characteristics typically attributed to the female gender. An example is women being blamed for being sexually assaulted. Heap blame is usually used in combination with other master suppression techniques. In the example given, heap blame could be used in combination with objectifying, where a woman would be blamed for inviting the sexual assault because of her "provocative" outfit (Center of Gender Equality, 2001).

In Medina's case study, heaping blame was observed as a tool used to humiliate female politicians (2019). The study gave further clarification on the meaning of the technique. Characteristics regarded as shameful are attributed to female politicians as a means to embarrass them. These characteristics are often stereotypes of the female gender such as "gossips" or "is unreliable".

Objectifying

Objectifying is reducing a person into an object by discussing their body and appearance in situations where it is irrelevant. Usually, when directed at women, the discussion involves the hyper sexualization of her appearance. This technique is commonly used in the work

environment and in politics. While men are judged politically by their intellect and skills, women are judged politically by their appearance (Ländin, 2014).

Feminist theories argue that because men are the dominant group in a patriarchal society, they are the objectifiers while women are objectified (MacKinnon, 1987). Orly Bareket and Nurit Shnabel (2019) examined this argument on a study on the motivation of heterosexual men to objectify women. They found a correlation between the desire for dominance over women and the objectification of them. Men who believed that their dominance over women was being threatened - for example by having a woman boss - were more likely to sexually objectify them. However, the same correlation did not exist when tested among heterosexual women. Consistent with Bareket and Shnabel, Wolf (1991) argues that men tend to objectify women in order to put them in place and retain their status as the dominant gender.

Similarly to female politicians who contribute to their own silencing when faced with the technique of making invisible, women who are objectified tend to passively accept it, since “objects don’t object” (Calogero, 2013, p.312).

Most research on objectification is done around the work environment and how women are perceived in it. While studies do agree on the idea that men are normally perceived as more competent than women (Eagly et al., 2000; Fiske et. al., 2002; Rollero et al., 2013), there are conflicting results on whether or not objectification reduces the perception of female competence. In a study conducted by Chiao (2008), on the US Presidential election, female presidential candidates who seemed more attractive were viewed as less competent. Additionally, Heflick and Goldenberg (2009) demonstrated that a focus on women’s appearance leads to a reduced perception of competence. On the other hand, Rollero and Tartaglia (2013) did not reach the same conclusion. Their study demonstrated that objectification does not reduce perception of female competence.

Force/Threat of Force

Use of force is a part of this technique that is very easily identified. It ranges from a slap or push, to domestic violence and sexual harassment. However, force/threat of force encompasses more than just physical violence. Cyberbullying, as well as psychological violence can be considered

as part of this technique. It is especially hard to detect threats when they are not clearly stated but may make a person feel unsafe (Ländin, 2014). An example of psychological violence that falls within this category is gaslighting. This is a type of manipulation where an individual makes others question their own memory, judgement or perception of a situation, which may lead to low self esteem and second guessing oneself. This is often seen in a work environment or relationships.

Force/threat of force and objectification often overlap. Research has demonstrated that one of the reasons men sexually harass women is to show dominance and punish “deviant” women (Maass et al., 2003). This behaviour can be categorized as an extreme form of sexual objectification (Szymanski et al., 2011).

1.3 Research Scope

In the previous part, each master suppression technique was discussed. Ås (2014) has distilled these master techniques from conversations between women and men that took place in the political realm. These techniques can also be found at the workplace. However, the extent to which these techniques are used in a university setting is so far unclear. There were very few studies that explored this topic in a university environment. University prepares students for their future careers. Therefore, we would like to investigate to what extent master suppression techniques are used in conversations at university. If so, they will probably be transferred and used at the workplace. If not, it might be that a shift in perception has taken place between the university and the workplace. This could possibly be explained by the fact that university students are often more in favor of gender equality compared to the younger generation and subsequently are more aware of how gender oppression takes place (Scarborough, 2016).

1.4 Research question and hypotheses

The aim of this study is to explore to what extent female university students enrolled at Dutch universities experience social manipulation. Most of the studies done on Master Suppression Techniques have focused on the work environment or political domain and little research exists

in a university environment. As such, this study focuses on universities across the Netherlands to fill this gap in the existing literature.

In order to get a better understanding of the use of Master Suppression Techniques, this study attempts to showcase how often women are subject to suppression techniques used by their male classmates. In addition, a comparison is made between how often the techniques are used in different environments within a university. The difference between the environments is measured according to the gender ratio of students present in them.

Based on previous work, more women than men were subjected to master suppression techniques at the workplace and in the political realm. Therefore, it is expected that women are also more likely to be subjected to master suppression techniques in a university environment. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis: Female students are more likely to be subjected to master suppression techniques than their male counterparts in a university setting.

To test the hypothesis, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were carried out. A survey was distributed for the quantitative part and interviews were conducted for the qualitative part. The following two sections explore the data collection for this study and lead over to the analysis.

2 Quantitative analysis

2.1 Methodology: Survey design and data

In order to create a general understanding of the extent of social manipulation and the use of Master Suppression Techniques among students, a quantitative survey was conducted.

Participants and Procedure

A survey was constructed that was aligned with the construction of the interview script in terms of questions and structure to enable a comparative analysis of data and drawing joint conclusions between the two different means of data collection employed in this paper. To allow for a comparison between both genders and allow for the possibility that males are more likely to be subject to the use of master suppression methods, this survey was answered by both female as well as male students.

Students enrolled in a Dutch university, no matter whether national or foreign student, were targeted for data collection. Due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the survey was not allowed to be distributed through students' university email addresses and university guidelines do not allow for promotion of such material through official channels. Therefore, the study used convenience sampling in terms of the survey being distributed by the research team through student Whatsapp groups, Facebook groups, and online course announcements. No reward could be offered to participants based on their participation.

The target number of participants was set to 200 in order to achieve sufficient power. Due to time constraints, a final date for participation was set, leading to a total of 188 individuals who filled out the survey implemented in Qualtrics. The data contained two observations of people who were 50 years and older, which were removed from the sample. Moreover, two individuals did not identify themselves with a gender. These observations were removed as well, as this study tries to explore the differences between females and males. Finally, the research team excluded individuals who failed to complete more than 40% of the survey. These exclusion criteria resulted in a sample size of 173 observations. All individuals were explicitly asked for their consent upon participation.

65 % of the participants indicated identifying as female ($n = 113$) and 35 % as male ($n = 60$; *Table 2.2*). The average age in the sample was 22 years old, with an age range from 18 to 37 years old (*Table 2.1*). On average, the ratio of male to female students in the programs attended by the participants was divided equally. However, the ratio tended to differ strongly between programs and individuals, with a large standard deviation. Some individuals indicated being in a program with no male enrolled, whereas others indicated a ratio of 92 percent male students in their program (*Table 2.1*). This variability may also be related to the study one is enrolled in, with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics)-related subjects typically having less females enrolled (Huang, 2000). When looking at the specific study programs indicated by our sample, most were enrolled either in a social/behavioral study program, law, or an economics, business & management related program (*Table 2.4*). 60 percent of all participants indicated holding Dutch nationality, followed by 30 percent of the participants indicating a different European background (*Table 2.2*). With regard to ethnicity, most participants were white, followed by 8 percent of participants with an Asian background (*Table 2.3*).

Table 2.1 Continuous variables within the sample

Variable	n	Mean	St. dev	Min	Max
Age	173	21.81	3.11	18	37
Male-female ratio	169	45.74	20.02	0	92

Table 2.2 Nationality distribution within the sample

Variable	n
Dutch	103
European (non-Dutch)	51
Asian	6
North-American	3
South-American	1
African	2
Other	4

Table 2.3 Ethnicity distribution within the sample

Variable	n
White	138
Asian	14
Hispanic	3
Black	6
Arab	2
Mixed	7

Table 2.4 Study field distribution within the sample

Variable	n
Social/behavioral	50
Law	44
Economics, management, business	43
Natural sciences (mathematics, chemistry)	2
IT/technology	13
Arts	2
Health, medicine, nursing	7
Education	1
Other	10

Measures

Demographics. After providing informed consent, participants were asked to provide several demographic background characteristics. This included the individual's gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, at which Dutch University they study, their field of study, and how they would describe the male/female ratio in their study program.

Occurrence of Master Suppression Techniques. The main outcome variable of the study, namely the occurrence of master suppression techniques, was measured in a binary fashion (“*Has this ever occurred to you?*”). For every technique, a clear explanation was given, including examples of situations where this technique could have been applied. These use contexts were provided in order to account for situations when the student indeed has had experience with the suppression technique yet did not consciously perceive it as such a case. A more extensive explanation of the specific survey questions, how they were measured and constructed, is listed in *Appendix A*.

Frequency of Master Suppression Techniques. Whereas the main interest remained in whether a suppression technique had ever been applied or not, the researchers also gained follow-up information. Hence, if participants indicated the occurrence of a given suppression technique, they were also displayed the question of frequency (“*How often has this happened to you?*”). This variable was scored on a scale from 1 (*only happened once*) to 5 (*multiple times per day*).

Details of Manipulator. Due to our interest not only in the presence of suppression techniques but the context of it, we also relied on further follow-up questions regarding the person who had applied the suppression technique. Importantly, whenever the participant had multiple situations in mind where the given master suppression technique occurred, they were asked to think about the most memorable example. More specifically, they were asked about the inflictor’s gender, his or her age, and whether it was another student or a teacher.

Statistical analysis

All data was analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics, Version number 25. Data was first cleaned, and cased with response rates below 40 percent deleted. The experimental alpha-value was set to 0.05, as is common practice in the social sciences. The main analyses concerned logistic regressions with the dependent variable being the occurrence of a given suppression technique and gender as its sole predictor. Follow-up questions were solely analyzed with sufficient sample size. Concretely, we conducted follow-up analyses in case more than 20% of the sample had experienced a given suppression technique. We hereby largely relied on contingency tables between the gender of the oppressor and the victim.

2.2 Results

Withholding information

Out of the total sample, 129 participants report that they have never experienced - or could not remember - a situation where it felt like information has been withheld from them, whereas 42 indicated that they have experienced this master suppression technique.

The results of the logistic regression model with gender as the sole predictor show that generally female students are significantly more likely to be subject to the use of withholding information. Gender of the victim explains 3.9% (Cox & Snell R^2) of the variation in whether the participant experienced the suppression technique of withholding information).

Table 2.6

		What was the gender of the person who withheld information?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	2	6	8
	Female	12	22	34
Total		14	28	42

When looking at the specific genders of the persons who withheld information from each other, *Table 2.6* shows that females are more likely to withhold information from each other. This could be due to the fact that females are more likely to internalize their behavior, whereas males are more likely to externalize their behavior (Andre et al., 2020). While externalized behavior refers to showing aggression and frustrations in an explicit manner, internalized behavior is an inward way of handling aggression and keeping it to one self. Withholding information from a peer does not necessarily happen explicitly; it is an implicit way of suppressing somebody. For instance, a peer can withhold information from another, without anyone actually knowing about the information asymmetry.

Moreover, the results show that more females indicated that they have experienced that they were subject to this suppression technique than males. Moreover, interestingly, out of the 28 participants who indicated that another female withheld information from them, only 5 participants indicated that they studied in a male-dominated study environment (male-female

ratio > 50%). Therefore, it makes intuitive sense that participants who study in a female dominated environment are more likely to experience withholding information from another female peer.

Putting to shame

Out of the total sample, 138 participants report that they have never experienced - or could not remember - a situation where it felt like they have been put to shame, whereas 33 indicated that they have experienced this master suppression technique.

The results of the logistic regression model with gender as the sole predictor show that generally female students are significantly more likely to be subject to the use of putting to shame. Gender of the victim explains 0.2% (Cox & Snell R²) of the variation in whether the participant experienced the suppression technique of putting to shame. Hence, females are not significantly more likely to experience being put to shame. Moreover, gender solely accounts for 6.2% of variation in the frequency of being put to shame. While females seem to experience it on a slightly less regular basis, this relationship is not significant.

Table 2.7

		What was the gender of the person who put the participant to shame?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	6	4	10
	Females	11	12	23
Total		17	16	33

When looking at the specific genders of the persons who put each other to shame, Table 2.7 shows that more females indicated that they felt like they experienced being put to shame at least once throughout their study. Looking at these results, it seems like males put males as well as females to shame whereas females mostly put other females to shame. However, this seems to be quite evenly spread given that the sample contained more females than males.

Objectifying

25 participants indicated that they remembered a situation where it felt like they were objectified, while 146 reported they could not remember a situation where this master suppression technique happened.

The results of the logistic regression model with gender as the sole predictor show that generally female students are not significantly more likely to be subject to the use of being objectified. Gender of the victim explains 0.4% (Cox & Snell R²) of the variation in whether the participant experienced this suppression technique. Hence, females are not significantly more likely to experience being objectified. Moreover, gender solely accounts for 4.3% of variation in the frequency of being put to shame.

Table 2.8

		What was the gender of the person who objectified?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	1	6	7
	Females	13	5	18
Total		14	11	25

When looking at the specific genders of the persons who objectified each other, Table 2.8 shows that both females and males experienced situations where it felt like they were objectified. Interestingly, females mostly indicated that another male objectified them. On the other hand, most male students stated that it was merely female peers who objectified them. Therefore, there seems to be an effect of people objectifying people from the other gender. Particularly men do not seem to objectify other men. According to these results, it seems like this suppression technique mostly occurs across genders.

Threatening to use force

Out of the total 171 participants in the survey, only 7 of them stated that they experienced that someone threatened to use force against them. This clearly shows that students rarely are subject to the use of force against them. As the sample size is this small, the regression models did not show whether a particular gender was more likely to use or subject to the use of this suppression technique. It seems like, overall, students are not often subject to this suppression technique.

Table 2.9

		What was the gender of the person who threatened to use force?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	4	0	4
	Females	1	2	3
Total		15	2	7

Table 2.9 shows that, in the rare situations where a student was threatened by another student to use force, it is mostly male-to-male dominance. If women threaten to use force, which rarely happens, they threaten other women and not men. This is consistent with the findings of prior research. Björkqvist (2018) found that there are differences across gender when it comes to aggressive behavior: While females and males are verbally equally aggressive, males are generally more physically aggressive whereas females are more indirectly aggressive. As threatening to use force is a direct way of showing dominance and aggression, it intuitively makes sense that less females threaten to use force towards peers.

Double punishment

Overall, 145 of the participants reported that they never experienced double punishment, whereas 26 of them stated they have experienced this suppression technique. In the logistic regression model with gender as the main predictor, gender of the victim only explained 0.5% (Cox & Snell R^2) of the variation in whether the participant experienced being double punished. Therefore, females are not significantly more likely to experience being double punished.

Table 2.10

		What was the gender of the person who double punished the participant?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	4	3	7
	Females	9	10	19
Total		13	13	26

When looking at the results of Table 2.10, mostly females stated that they experienced double punishment in their studies. However, this could also be due to the fact that there were more female participants in the total dataset. These females indicated that they were double punished both by males and females. The results are equal for males; they are also both double punished by females and males. Therefore, this seems to be a master suppression technique which is experienced by both males and females and exhibited by both females and males.

Ridiculing

Out of the total participants, 42 reported they have been ridiculed in their studies, while 129 report they have never been ridiculed. Generally, females are not significantly more likely to experience being ridiculed. Gender of the victim only explains 0.6% (Cox & Snell R²) of all variation in whether somebody experienced being ridiculed.

Table 2.11

		What was the gender of the person who ridiculed the participant?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	5	7	12
	Females	22	8	30
Total		27	15	42

Table 2.11 shows that females reported that they are being ridiculed more frequently by men. Across men, they state that they are being ridiculed both by males and females. Therefore, it is clear that females are more likely to be ridiculed by another male.

Making invisible

Across the total sample, 74 participants stated that they have experienced a situation where it felt like they were made invisible, whereas 97 reported that they could not remember a situation where this happened. Therefore, according to this analysis, this makes it the most applied suppression technique in the university environment. According to the results of the logistic regression model with gender as the sole predictor, females are significantly more likely to experience being made invisible as gender of the victim explained 7.3% (Cox & Snell R²) of all variation in whether somebody experienced being made invisible.

Table 2.12

		What was the gender of the person who ridiculed the participant?		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender participant	Male	10	4	14
	Females	26	32	58
Total		36	36	72

The findings in Table 2.12 show that both females and males indicated that they felt like they were ever ridiculed by another individual. Males are mostly ridiculed by males, whereas females are both ridiculed by men and women. Out of all females who ridicule others, females mostly ridicule females instead of men. These findings indicate that overall, females are more likely to make another person feel invisible. Making someone feel invisible is both an internal as well as an external way of expressing one's feelings.

2.3 Discussion

Based on the results of the survey, gender discrimination is definitely present within a university context. However, the Master Suppression Techniques are only present to a certain extent. Regardless of their gender, students on average indicated that they were most commonly subject to the use of the Master Suppression Techniques of withholding information, ridiculing, and being made invisible. Few participants indicated that they were ever in a situation where someone threatened to use force, the most direct and violent manner of expressing aggression. When elaborating further on students' gender, and specifically noting whether females are more subject to the use of certain Suppression techniques, the results are clear. According to the survey, female students are significantly more likely to be subject to the use of withholding information, putting to shame, and being made invisible. Females are more likely to withhold information from other females, even though this result may be influenced by the fact that most participants who indicated they ever experienced withholding information, studied in a female dominated environment. Males put both males and females to shame, while females mostly put other females to shame. Lastly, males are mostly ridiculed by males, whereas females are both ridiculed by male peers as well female peers.

These conclusions, however, must be regarded in light of several factors limiting the reliability and validity of our results. First of all, we have already highlighted that while the target number of recruitment was 200, only 173 observations built our analytical sample. While this discrepancy may appear rather small, the effect sizes detected in our sample are smaller than assumed in the power calculation performed prior to data collection. Due to such master suppression techniques mainly having been observed in the workplace (Bohlin & Berg, 2017), the small effect sizes observed in this study may still reflect meaningful early tendencies that could be detected with a bigger sample. This especially applies to our follow-up analyses regarding, for example, the gender of the oppressor. Only using those who indicated the occurrence could be analyzed, resulting in subsamples much too small to allow for generalization. For our main analysis, one may also argue that due to the detrimental consequences that even a few such experiences of male oppression may have on women in terms of long-term frustration and individual discontent (Medina, 2015), researchers should align the experimental alpha-value. One could hereby argue that we should increase the Type I error of the

experiment (rejecting the null hypothesis when it is actually true) to allow for more chances to detect such detrimental tendencies (Banerjee et al., 2009). This, however, seems more like a political discussion in terms of how precariously preventive programs should be implemented.

A further limitation with the study is the convenience sampling technique that was utilized. We can hence not assume a random sample from the Dutch student population, which was the population of interest in this paper. This can, for example, be seen in the demographic characteristics indicated by our sample. While only 60% of students indicated being of Dutch descent, the current number of international students can be estimated at somewhere between 23% (ICEF Monitor, 2019) and 32% (Statistica, 2019; Utrecht University, 2021). Hence, international students seem to be somehow overrepresented in our sample, while other groups such as second-generation immigrants of other ethnicities may be underrepresented. Even though it might be interesting to dive deeper into the question whether students with a specific background are more likely to be subject to the use of the suppression techniques, the overall sample size is simply too small to focus on the students' ethnicities or cultural backgrounds for this study. We hence encourage further research to further explore potential influences of cultural backgrounds on gender oppression in the Netherlands. On top of that, future research could also investigate how the small tendencies that can already be detected in the Netherlands can be replicated in other cultures and nations. Considering that the Netherlands scores sixth in the European Union on the Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019), we hypothesize that much bigger effects would be detected when regarding a student population in a different country.

Furthermore, one large limitation is that while such master suppression techniques may have, by definition, occurred in the classroom, students may not be aware of these circumstances in hindsight. Gender roles may, in fact, have come into play, such that girls may have internalized their roles and would not define the experience as something extraordinary as they would regard the male's oppressive behavior as an appropriate reaction (Blackmore, 2003). Further, females may even suppress the encoding of such unpleasant experiences in their memory (Schimmack & Hartmann, 1997). While we would have liked to extend our study to observe classrooms and rely on experts to code the occurrences of master suppression techniques, the current pandemic hindered most interactive classroom discussions amongst students, making an observation

impossible. We would hence recommend that this research question should be investigated by means of an observational study once possible again.

While it may be the case that experiences are underreported, even those that have been reported in the survey only provide limited information. While the use of quantitative methods to study communication amongst students allowed for a larger scale generalization of findings to the Dutch university context, this method did not allow us to identify the underlying processes and contexts in which those suppression techniques were used. In order to gain a more detailed impression of the cognitive and emotional processes assigned to these experiences by students, and to further explore explanatory mechanisms, we will hence extend the findings of this quantitative study with interviews held with several students in the same population.

3 Qualitative analysis

3.1 Methodology

To gain deeper insights into the underlying dynamics of master suppression techniques interviews were conducted with 30 students. The interview was semi-structured to provide enough direction to guide the interview process without limiting the room for deep-dives at interesting points made by the interviewee. Between November 2020 and January 2021, a total of 30 interviews have been conducted; twenty-seven online and three in person. The online interviews have been conducted through the online software Zoom. The shortest interview lasted 11 minutes and 56 seconds and the longest interview lasted 34 minutes and 23 seconds. Participants were selected based on the courses they were enrolled in, striving for variability in terms of field of studies and its related gender ratio as well as the university attended. The interviewers used their network to identify and reach out to potential participants from a range of different studies and universities.

To reduce the bias of interviewees, no information was distributed beforehand on what the interview was about nor what the Master Suppression Techniques are. Before the interview, a consent form was read and signed by the interviewee to ensure that the data can be used in the context of this study, without publishing personal information. This can be found in Appendix B. To ease the interviewee into the situation, demographics questions were asked first. Those were simple and intuitive to answer and aim to make the interviewee feel comfortable in the situation. Additionally, this allows to collect data to differentiate the participants into different groups.

The interview itself contained seven questions, with five sub-questions each. As the interviews were semi-structured, the sub-questions were merely a guide for the interviewer in case the interviewee goes off topic; however, the interviewee had the freedom to answer the main questions with as much or little detail as desired. Each one of the seven main questions was about one of the seven Master Suppression Techniques. After each question was asked, a small explanation of what that Suppression Technique entailed was provided along with short examples of real life situations. This provided the interviewee with the necessary knowledge to

answer the questions in a comprehensive manner and potentially remind them of such situations that happened in the past. A comprehensive overview of the questions asked in the interview can be found in Appendix C.

3.2 Results and discussion

Thematic analysis from the interview data

To dive deeper into the underlying dynamics of the master suppression techniques and gain deeper insights into the experience of students that were subjected to it, a thematic analysis was carried out. The interview data revealed several themes that will be discussed in this part. The first theme concerns the frequency of master suppression techniques used. The second theme involves the reactions towards the techniques. Finally, the third theme discusses the student's reflections upon these kinds of situations.

Master suppression techniques

Most students experienced one or more situations in which suppression techniques were used. Specifically, interviewees most often encountered a situation in which they were made invisible or objectified. Predominantly, male peers induced feelings of objectification or invisibility. However - in line with the quantitative results - about an equal number of female and male peers withheld information from the female student. The suppression occurred often in a group setting or during class, rather than on campus. Force or threat of force were experienced more often than double punishment or being blamed.

Making invisible

Making invisible was the technique most often experienced by the interviewees (81.48% of the participants had experienced it). It was mostly male peers who made the interviewees feel invisible (14 males vs 2 females, 3 mixed groups, and 2 teacher/staff). As with most of the techniques, it was mainly experienced in group or class settings. The majority of female students did not actively address that they were made invisible and instead chose to not do anything about it. It seems plausible that it is most likely to occur in group settings where there is no authority figure leading a conversation and people freely talk with each other. The fact that it is mostly

ignored might indicate that the students do not find it as bad as for example threat of force. In the latter case, a lot of students addressed this issue and also indicated that they would desire for a third party to intervene. Another explanation for choosing to ignore the situation is that because students often face such situations, they might be conditioned to it, thereby not regarding it as something problematic. An example was a student who was part of a group project who, whenever she came up with an idea for the project, was ignored by her peers and they just went on with their own ideas. The student did not speak up because the assignment was not graded, but would have liked for the teacher to ask each student individually about their answers.

Objectifying

Objectifying was the second most often experienced technique (by 59.26%). This technique was mainly used by males in university related settings, such as in activities and meetings of student associations, as well as in class and group settings. Often, the interviewees ignored the situation and when they did, they later regretted not speaking up. This might be because it either happens so often they are used to it or maybe they do not want to draw even more attention to the situation, which might be embarrassing for them. It also seems as though it only becomes a problem and is experienced once the formal setting of a university is left, so in associations and group works, where there is not always an authority figure present or able to pay attention to everyone. An example was a student who was part of a student association, but felt as though the male members only viewed the female members as possible prizes and were constantly “on the hunt”, which was partially the reason that the student left the association.

Withholding Information

Withholding information was the third most common technique used (experienced by 40.74%). The interviewees were subjected to it by male and female peers equally, in group settings. Students often regretted that they ignored the situation. Some wished that a third party had intervened, and others did not. The withholding that has taken place might not always be done with malicious intent, due to the size of the group or by the fact that group meetings often occur online. However, working in a group setting requires attentiveness and sensitivity to all members of the group. An example for this was a student who was part of a group project, from which one member dropped out of university. The other group members knew that but did not share that

information with her, and in the end she had to take over the missing students part in a presentation, which meant she had to put more time into the project.

Ridicule

The technique was used by male peers as well as teachers and staff (experienced by 29.63 %; done by 4 teachers, 3 male peers, 1 staff member). Every interviewee who experienced it ignored it and did not speak up. No one wanted a third party to get involved, and the regret was mixed. Maybe it was ignored by all because, especially with the teachers, students do not feel as if they are in a position to argue with an authority figure. And a third party would most likely be another adult university employee. Maybe a clearly impartial third party would be helpful in such situations. An example was a student who, in her first year, had a professor she referred to as “very old school” who constantly made side comments and remarks directed at or about the female students, which left them feeling uncomfortable in his class, like “the average of the girls grade is an eight, the average for the guys grade is a five. Guys what are you doing?”. It made her feel as though she was not welcome in the class, and she did not speak up.

Force/ Threat of Force

Force or threat of force was the fifth most common technique used (experienced by 18.52%). It was used by male peers and mostly in university related settings. This is the only technique on which every interviewee who experienced it insisted and spoke up or acted on it. This is also the only technique where interviewees clearly favored a third party intervention. It seems as though a situation needs to get bad for people to speak up and all the other techniques are more or less just accepted and seen as normal. An example was a student who was at a student association party with a friend when a male peer started coming on to her and her friend, and started insulting her as she was showing no interest in him. Afterwards he denied ever saying those things, and insisted it was a lie. This is a clear example of gaslighting. The student did not reach out to a third party, because she did not believe a teacher could have any influence on a situation in a student association.

Heap Blame/ Put to Shame

For Heap Blame it was mostly females who used this technique. This one was also most common during work group settings and in class settings. Most ignored it when it happened and

do not regret not insisting and speaking up. It happened to 14.81 % of the interviewed. An example of this was a student who was part of a group project in which one member of the group did not do their part, and after the student criticised that member for not doing the work, she was criticized and shamed as if it was her fault the other student did not do their part. Another example is that of a teacher who, after his student had to leave class early, bad mouthed the student in front of the others. After she found out she approached him to ask whether he really did that. He made her feel bad by raising his voice at her and telling her he does not like students missing his class.

Double punishment

Double punishment was experienced as often as Heap Blame (14.81%) , but it was mostly male peers who used it. It was mostly experienced in group settings, once in class. An example of this was a student who was working on a group project and the work was coming along slowly, and the group agreed they needed to speed up. So the interviewee said for the group to get going, and afterwards a male group member commented about her just wanting attention.

Reflections on the reactions

Overall, most female students choose to ignore the situation when master suppression techniques were used against them. For instance, when they felt suppressed during a group project, they did not actively seek to address the situation. Instead, they started to work harder and followed their own plan to show people that they were capable of the tasks at hand. One of the students explained that she chose to ignore the situation because:

"You know, it's more subtle. And I think it works best in that kind of situation to actually prove your value and for them to recognize it instead of addressing the problem openly, at least in my view."

Another student underlined the subtleness with which the suppression manifests itself. Therefore, they find it hard to proactively call out the person or say something about it:

“I mean, you know, it's not like they're calling me a, you know, I'm a slut or...or actually assaulting me in the street or something. It's more subtle.”

And even though students do their best to show their worth, one of the students felt that she had to do that, but in a lowkey fashion, because otherwise she might be regarded as ‘annoying’:

“I did not feel part of the group [in which she worked together with 5 male members]. I had the feeling to do my best, but in a lowkey fashion, to prove my worth. But still, I might come across as annoying. The other group members will not tell you directly, because it is part of the group process, but you might run the risk of being experienced as difficult if you show that you put a lot of effort in it”

Another reason for ignoring the situation is self-doubt. For example, a student was working on a group project. She came up with an idea, but the other team members ignored her input. She reported that at that time she thought ‘*Oh this must have been a bad idea*’ and felt inferior to her group members. She had the feeling that she actually did not know as much as she initially thought. But in hindsight, she changed her attitude by saying:

“I should not think ‘oh this is not gonna work’ but I should have insisted on this idea, because, although not perfect, it was worth discussing it at least.”

Another student experienced a similar situation, when her question was ignored by her teacher she thought ‘*hmm this must have been a silly question*’. And she refrained from addressing it.

Preferred reaction

When ignored, some students wished that someone else had intervened, for instance, a teacher. Other students reported that they wished that they had actively addressed the issue, by for instance, speaking up. But in case students actively addressed the issue, this was often done at a later stage than they wished. Derived from this, we can see that often the initial reaction to a suppression technique is to ignore it, but when it prolongs, students are more willing to speak up.

Also when the teacher was the perpetrator, most female students choose to ignore the situation. Looking back, some students wished to actively address the issue, but didn't know how.

However, speaking up was usually the preferred reaction in smaller groups. Students that ignored the situation often regretted that they did ignore the suppression technique in a small group. After initially ignoring the situation and, perhaps internalizing the issue, students often reflect upon it and then say things like: *"ok this was actually not OK. I should have addressed the issue immediately"*. Conversely, when suppression occurred in a bigger group (e.g. in class), or when there was an imbalance of power (e.g. a student vs a teacher), students often did not regret that they had ignored the situation. In these situations, they often desired another student or person to intervene in the situation.

In contrast to these findings, none of the interviewed students regretted their reaction when they actively addressed the situation immediately, regardless of whether it happened in a smaller or bigger group setting.

Bachelor and Master students

No difference was found in the reactions between master and bachelor students. However, what was noticeable for the master students is that they often reflected on their behavior displayed during the bachelor period of their studies. The master students concluded that during their bachelor's, they have been more lenient towards people who treated them unfairly. They often blamed themselves for these kinds of situations, thereby internalizing the situation. Rather than holding the other person, who used the master suppression technique, responsible for the unpleasant experience, they attributed this unpleasant experience to themselves. In other words, this might indicate that younger students are less able to identify such situations and that by going through these experiences and reflecting on them, they become more aware of the unfair situation they found themselves in. However, another explanation could be the increased media attention of gender inequality in general.

Female dominated programs versus male dominated programs

No explicit differences were found between male and female dominated study programs. Male dominated programs were often technical or business oriented. Whereas female dominated programs were often found in the realm of psychology, sociology and human resources.

However, what stood out was that often in business oriented programs, more suppression techniques occurred and women were often allocated stereotypical roles (e.g. writing down notes, working on the lay-out of the report instead of doing the technical tasks, doing administrative tasks). Women also felt more objectified. For instance, one of the students had to promote the group project at a network event. She was chosen to stand in the room with the voting box, because the group members expected that, as she was an attractive woman, she would attract more voters than the other, male, group members. This could be explained by the corporate culture business programs which are often adopted. The corporate culture often neglects the roles of women. In the corporate world, women are less valued than men as they tend to receive less pay or promotions and they are unequally presented in executive roles compared to men (Elmuti et al., 2003).

Female dominated programs

Although the number of women in the program exceeded the number of men in the program, in the majority of the cases, men used the master suppression techniques. The interviewees often did not address the issue and instead chose to ignore it. A reason is that the master suppression techniques are more subtle and implicit and, therefore, often ignored by women, because they run the risk of being regarded as 'difficult' or 'annoying'. An explanation for the fact that men use more suppression techniques than women even when they find themselves in a female dominated setting can be explained by social role theory. This theory explains that in Western culture, men and women are assigned particular roles based on their gender. Women are expected to behave in a more agreeable fashion than men. If they do not, they violate their gender role and are often considered to be 'difficult' or 'bossy'. Men and women often behave in such a way that it conforms to their gender role, to avoid friction within themselves and with others (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Therefore, even in female dominated programs, women behave according to the

dominant gender roles, because these gender roles are ingrained in Western culture. Thus, social role theory can explain why women often ignore or do not address the issue at hand, when they are being subjected to one of the master suppression techniques. An exception to this was objectification: many women called the other person out when subjected to this technique. A possible explanation is the increased awareness given to objectification and its explicitness, due to which women might be more willing to actively seek to address the person that objectifies them.

Male dominated programs

Similarly to the female dominated programs, more men than women used master suppression techniques in comparison to women in male dominated studies. In contrast to the female dominated programs however, women experienced more instances in which they were objectified in the male-dominated programs. They were also less likely to actively address objectification, and instead, choose to ignore the situations. When they chose to ignore it, they often wished that a third party had intervened. However, if they actively insisted on the situation, an intervention by a third party was less desirable.

4 Discussion and concluding remarks

4.1 Analysis of findings

This research aimed at investigating how the master of suppression techniques were implemented in a university-related conversational setting. For this purpose, a qualitative and a quantitative study was conducted. Both will be analyzed in this section and related back to the literature review.

The master suppression technique “making invisible” was often experienced by females. The majority of the female students chose to ignore it. Similarly, the results from the quantitative study showed that more females than men felt invisible. These findings corroborate with the research carried out by Zimmerman and West (1975). The research showed that when interrupted, women tend to refrain from actively addressing it. In contrast, men tend to speak up when they are being interrupted (p.123). An explanation for this are the gender roles that dominate Western society. The female gender role prescribes that women should behave in a submissive way. Men, on the other hand, are prescribed to behave in a dominant fashion. If women do not show submissive behavior, in certain situations, they violate their specific gender role. This might lead to some backlash from the other party and seems less friendly (Rudman et al., 2001).

The quantitative research showed that female students experience more objectification than their male peers. However, females are not significantly more likely to be the subject of the suppression technique objectification. The qualitative analysis showed that objectification is the second most frequent suppression technique experienced by females from males. Objectification does often occur in a university-related setting such as student parties or events and not in a formal university setting. A possible explanation is that at student parties, it is more likely for a ‘mating ritual’ to occur than in other university settings. As such, the focus is more on sexual attraction than to the person. The study by Paladino and Puvia (2011) explains that when males focus on the sexual attraction of women, they are more inclined to dehumanize them. Due to the dehumanization process, women are also more likely to become objectified.

Thirdly, withholding information is the third most frequent master of suppression technique. The quantitative analysis finds that almost 25% of the survey participants experienced the withholding of information, with females being more frequently subjected to it than men. Although not hypothesized, female students are more likely to withhold information from one another. While not immediately logical, this trend would confirm previous research that showed that due to women being discouraged from displaying anger since it is perceived as unfeminine, they may redirect their anger in more passive-aggressive messages (Cox et al., 2003). However, the qualitative research showed an equal number of men and women making use of withholding information.

When women were subjected to the master suppression technique of ridicule, they often chose to ignore it. Women ignored it, because they would draw too much attention to themselves, if they would ask a third party to intervene. The quantitative research correlates to this by showing that almost 25% of females indicated they experienced facing ridicule, more frequently coming from men. These findings corroborate with the literature. Ridiculing affects more women than men. In addition, ridiculing often refers to gender stereotypes such as that women 'are overly emotional' and are therefore regarded as incompetent for the workplace (Center of Gender Equality, 2001).

The quantitative analysis showed that females are more likely subjected to heap of blame than males. Heaping of blame was mainly used by females on other females in a group or class setting. These findings are not in line with previous research which showed that heap of blame was a technique that is often combined with other suppression techniques, such as objectification. For instance, when a woman is scantily dressed, the woman herself is blamed when others are catcalling her. In the scenario of, for example, sexual abuse, women are often held accountable for it, because they were acting presumably in a provocative manner (Center of Gender Equality, 2001). More research is needed to establish the meaning of the findings of this paper.

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that double punishment affected both females and males equally and was inflicted by both genders. The interviewees experienced double punishment often while working in a group project. For example, when a group worked slowly,

the group decided to work faster. One of the group members was the *coach* of the group, in the sense that she was the driving force, by for instance initiating meetings and making sure that the group stuck to the planning. Only afterwards, a male group member remarked that she was drawing too much attention for doing so. The student can be regarded as expressing female leadership. Expressing leadership is often regarded as a type of behavior mainly expressed by males. When women express leadership in the same way as men, women are often penalized by onlookers, such as the male group member in this case, for expressing male behavior and thereby violating the prescribed female behavior. Women are more penalized than their male counterparts for the same behavior, because they might threaten the gender hierarchy that predominates western society (Rudman, 2012).

Threat of force was a master suppression technique that was least experienced among the respondents of the survey. One interviewee experienced a threat to use force and when she did, she immediately called it out. However, the results showed that mainly males experienced this and it mostly occurs on a male to male basis.

4.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

The results described above must, however, be interpreted with caution. First of all, as all participants for both the quantitative as well as the qualitative analysis studied in the Netherlands, a suggestion for future research would be to extend this analysis on a larger scale. Future scholars could do a cross-country analysis and investigate whether the results differ for other European countries. Especially in countries with a different culture when it comes to inequalities of opportunities for women, the results may drastically differ. In fact, there are countries where females rarely get the chance to attend university. In the rare situations where some may be able to attend university, there is a large chance that they are more subject to the usage of the Master Suppression techniques and that the results show different results.

Secondly, this report only focussed on a university environment. There are also other directions of education, more practical ones, where the usage of Master Suppression Techniques may occur. Therefore, an opportunity for future research would be to explore whether the results change if the setting changed from a university environment into a more practical way of studying and learning. Within a university environment, classes are usually relatively

large-scaled. For more practical study directions (Dutch: *Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs* and *Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs*), classes are usually more intimate. Therefore, it is likely that there is more interaction and social contact within these practical fields of study. An expansion of the survey already could state whether, on average, the results would differ when including non-University students.

4.3 Advise

Based on the interviews, survey and literature, advice has been compiled for universities to prevent, or mitigate the effects of master suppression techniques.

Master suppression techniques are often used in a subtle way. As such, onlookers, including teachers, are often not aware of what is happening. Even those who are subjected to such a technique might be initially confused or freeze in such a situation. Therefore, one way to easily identify and resist master suppression techniques is to create more awareness of their existence among the students and staff of universities.

Below a few suggestions are listed to increase awareness:

- organize seminars where students can receive training and practice in working together in a gender balanced environment;
- expression walls;
- forum theatre on gender discrimination;
- organized workshops for students on how to develop critical thinking skills and improve their self-esteem.

Furthermore, it is also important that the teachers create more awareness during class. They can achieve this by incorporating the gender perspective in their teaching. In this way they can provide a global and critical view on different subjects of certain studies. To prevent teachers and other university staff from using the suppression techniques themselves, and to ensure they are able to recognize them, there should also be seminars organized for teachers and staff to be taught about them.

Many of the interviewed students would have also liked for the third party to be impartial, and not their teacher or another teacher. Universities should ensure another person to be reachable for students experiencing any of the suppression techniques, especially meant to deal with such experiences.

4.4 Overall conclusion

There is a growing amount of research that recognizes the importance of gender equality. Several scholars have proven that gender discrimination exists within a business context (Elmuti et al., 2003). However, little research has been done about gender discrimination within the university context, a field which is of great importance. After all, universities are the place where most adolescents build connections, expand their knowledge with regard to academics, and get prepared for the professional worklife. Therefore, this paper analyses to what extent female university students enrolled at a Dutch university experience master suppression techniques in different contexts where communication takes place.

On a general level, the qualitative and quantitative analyses showed that female students are more likely to be subjected to some of the master suppression techniques than their male counterparts. These findings give us insight into how master suppression techniques are used in a university context. Research has shown that the techniques are used at the workplace and in politics, but this paper reveals that some of them are already in use at university. However, more research is needed to establish *when* the master suppression techniques are being developed into communication behavior, as it is likely that the usage of social manipulation techniques is already present in an earlier stage of adolescent's education. Therefore, even though it is not clear yet when the master suppression techniques are developed, this study has discovered that they are indeed present and that female students are more likely to be subject to some of the techniques than males. To address and counter this social manipulation properly, interventions can already be implemented within education systems rather than at a later stage - at the workplace or political field.

5 References

- Andre, Q., & Geeraert, B., & Lebel, C. (2020). Brain structure and internalizing and externalizing behavior in typically developing children and adolescents. *Brain Structure and Function*, 225. doi:10.1007/s00429-019-01973-y.
- Ås, B., & Perry, C. (1975). On Female Culture an attempt to formulate a theory of women's solidarity and action. *Acta Sociologica*, 18(2-3), 142-161
- Ås, B. (1978). Hersketeknikker. Working paper delivered to the Kjerringråd in Oslo, (3), 17–21.
- Ås, B. (2004). The Five Master Suppression Techniques. In B. Engegård (ed.), *Women in White: The European Outlook*. Stockholm City Council, 78–83.
- Banerjee, A., Chitnis, U. B., Jadhav, S. L., Bhawalkar, J. S., & Chaudhury, S. (2009). Hypothesis testing, type I and type II errors. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 18(2), 127. doi:10.4103/0972-6748.62274
- Bareket, O. & Schnabel, N. (2019). Domination and Objectification: Men's Motivation for Dominance Over Women Affects Their Tendency to Sexually Objectify Women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 1-22, doi: 10.1177/0361684319871913
- Björkqvist, K. (2018). Gender differences in aggression. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 19, 39-42.
- Blackstone, A. (2003). *Gender Roles and Society*, in Julia R. Miller, Richard M. Lerner, and Lawrence B. Schiamberg (Eds.), *Human Ecology: An Encyclopedia of Children, Families, Communities, and Environments* (pp 335-338). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- BLS Reports. (2019, December 01). Retrieved January 11, 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2019/>
- Bohlin, R., & Berg, S. (2017). *Fem Härskartekniker, femtio motståndsstrategier*. Stockholm, Sweden: Ordfront Pocket.

- Bowles, H. R., & Babcock, L. (2013). How can women escape the compensation negotiation dilemma? Relational accounts are one answer. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37(1), 80-96.
- Calogero, R. M. (2013). Objects don't object: Evidence that self objectification disrupts women's social activism. *Psychological Science*, 24, 312–318. doi:10.1177/0956797612452574
- Center for Gender and Equality Norway (2001). *Domination techniques: What they are and how to combat them*. Union of Women's Organizations of Macedonia.
- Cox, D. L., Bruckner, K. H., & Stabb, S. D. (2003). *The anger advantage*. New York: Broadway/Doubleday.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S.J. (2002). Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109, 573-598.
- Eagly, A.H., Wood, W., & Diekmann, A.B. (2000) Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal. In: T. Eckes, H.M. Trautner (Eds.), *The developmental social psychology of gender* (pp. 123-174). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Eagly, A. H. (2013). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Psychology Press.
- Elmuti, D., Lehman, J., Harmon, B., Lu, X., Pape, A., Zhang, R., & Zimmerle, T. (2003). Inequality between genders in the executive suite in corporate America: Moral and ethical issues. *Equal Opportunities International*.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (2019, October 7). *Gender Equality Index 2019: Netherlands* [Online Publication]. Retrieved from <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-netherlands>
- Huang, G. (2000). *Entry and persistence of women and minorities in college science and engineering education*. National Center for Education Statistics.
- ICEF Monitor (2019, May 15). *Foreign enrollment continues to grow in the Netherlands* [Online News Article]. Retrieved from

<https://monitor.icef.com/2019/05/foreign-enrolment-continues-to-grow-in-the-netherlands>

/

Lakoff, R. (1995). Cries and whispers. *Gender articulated*, 25-50.

Ländin, C. (2014). *Härskartekniker - identifiera, hantera och förebygga*. [Suppression techniques - identify, manage and prevent.] Lund, Sweden: Grönegatan Förlag.

Linder, E. (2014 May 31). *Berit Ås 6: Searching for the Female Culture: A Five-Dimensional Model* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcS71EqIY1s>

Maass, A., Cadinu, M., Guarnieri, G., & Grasselli, A. (2003). Sexual harassment under social identity threat: The computer harassment paradigm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 853–870. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.853

MacKinnon, C. A. (1987). *Feminism unmodified: Discourses on life and law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Medina, M. C. (2019). Master Suppression Techniques and Gender Stereotypes as a Means to Discredit Female Leadership in the Media Representation of a President. A Case Study (Argentina 2011–2015). *Anuario Latinoamericano Ciencias Políticas y Relaciones Internacionales*, 8, 189-208, doi:10.17951/al.2019.8.189-208

Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P. (2001). Prescriptive gender stereotypes and backlash toward agentic women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 743-762.

Rudman, L. A., Moss-Racusin, C. A., Phelan, J. E., & Nauts, S. (2012). Status incongruity and backlash effects: Defending the gender hierarchy motivates prejudice against female leaders. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 165-179.

Scarborough, W. J., Sin, R., & Risman, B. (2019). Attitudes and the gender revolution: Egalitarianism, traditionalism, and ambivalence from 1977 through 2016. *Gender & Society*, 33(2), 173-200.

- Schimmack, U., & Hartmann, K. (1997). Individual differences in the memory representation of emotional episodes: Exploring the cognitive processes in repression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(5), 1064. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.73.5.1064
- Statista (2019). *International students in the Netherlands 2008-2019* [Graph]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/699754/international-students-in-the-netherlands/>
- Stubbs, K. R., "The Effects of Gender on Interruption among Peers" (2014). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 195. <https://dc.etsu.edu/honors/195>
- Szymanski, D. M., Moffitt, L. B., & Carr, E. R. (2011). Sexual objectification of women: Advances to theory and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39, 6–38. doi:10.1177/0011000010378402
- Utrecht University (2021, April 2). *More registrations, less dropout: universities have grown considerably due to the corona crisis* [Online News Article]. Retrieved from <https://www.dub.uu.nl/nl/nieuws/meer-inschrijvingen-minder-uitval-universiteiten-flink-gegroeid-door-coronacrisis>
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*. London, England: Vintage Books.
- Zimmerman, D. H. & West, C. (1975). *Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silences in Conversation*. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (Eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (pp 105-129). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Appendix

Appendix A - Survey questions

Have you ever felt like peers withheld information from you in a university environment?

Withholding information relates to making a person less able to make an informed choice. He or she is excluded from the decision making process, or information is purposely kept from him or her.

Provided examples:

- Someone makes decisions about a project you are in, without you being present and do not consult you on the matter;
- Someone withholds information when you are around, even though it concerns you;
- Someone does not inform you about an important deadline, even though it concerns you.

Have you ever felt like you were put to shame in a university environment?

Putting to shame refers to knowingly embarrassing somebody, or bringing attention to a person's mistakes in order to induce negative feelings of that person

Provided examples:

- Someone makes you feel guilty about something, even though it is not your fault;
- You are not being updated on the latest progress of a project. Then, others make you feel ashamed for not understanding certain information, even though you did not have access to the information that they controlled;
- A member of your group assignment does not do his or her part of the work. Worried that the deadline is approaching, you end up doing their part last minute. Then, you get blamed for doing a sloppy job, even though it was not your part in the first place.

Have you ever felt like you were objectified in a university environment?

Objectifying refers to discussing the appearance of one or several persons, in a situation where it is irrelevant. Usually, this lowers the legitimacy of this person.

Provided examples:

- Someone makes a comment about your appearance in a situation where it is irrelevant;

- When you question your peer's part of the assignment, instead of debating about the actual content of the project, they comment on what you are wearing.

Has anyone ever threatened to use force towards you in a university environment?

Threatening to use force refers to somebody threatening with, or actually using physical strength towards you in a conversation

Provided examples:

- Someone threatens to use physical force or violence with you;
- "If you do not shut up, I will get aggressive with you".

Have you ever felt double punished in a university environment?

Double punishment refers to, regardless of how a person acts, he or she is punished for their actions, or they are dismissed as unimportant

Provided examples:

- You are working on an assignment. Firstly, the teacher criticized you for being too quiet. So you spoke up more, but now, he/she calls you bossy;
- When you do your group assignment thoroughly, you receive complaints for being too slow. However, when you do your group assignment efficiently, you are criticized for not finishing the work properly.

Have you ever felt like you were ridiculed in a university environment?

Ridiculed refers to attempts to manipulate a conversation by portraying the arguments of the other, or even the person itself, in a ridiculing manner

Provided examples:

- a. Someone uses expressions to ridicule you based on stereotypes of your gender:
 - "You are so emotional";
 - "Did you really come up with that idea? Seems too complicated for someone of your gender".
- b. Sometimes, these expressions include infantilizing you:
 - "You are so cute when you get angry";
 - "Oh sweetheart, just calm down".

Have you ever felt like you were made invisible in a university environment?

Making invisible refers to silencing, or even marginalizing people of another group or opinion, by means of ignoring them

Provided examples:

- Someone starts talking and possibly interrupts you when it is your turn to speak;
- Someone takes something that you said and uses it as if it were their idea;
- When it is your turn to speak, others start to talk to each other, browse through their phones, etc.

Appendix B - Consent Form

Participant Number/Initials

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Consent Form

Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without any reason and without any negative consequences. In addition, if you do not wish to answer particular questions you are free to decline.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be linked with the research materials and you will not be identified or identifiable in the report that results from the research.

The interview will be recorded. The audio for this interview will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of the recording without your written permission and no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

Do you give consent to take part in this interview?

Please say 'yes' if you do not have any objections or 'no' if you do have any objections for participating in this study.

Name of participant

Date

Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix C - Interview questions

These questions should be answered before the interview:

- Interviewee Number (for privacy reasons no name):
- Gender:
- Age:
- Nationality:
- University:
- Course:
- University Level:
- In your studies, how would you describe the male/female ratio? For example: 20% male, 80% female

Thank you for being willing to take part in a follow-up interview to the previous survey. First of all, we would like to assure you that you will remain completely anonymous in the report and your name will not be published or revealed at any point in time.

Before we begin, we would like to establish that this interview only takes into consideration situations that happened in a university environment. This means any event that happened on campus, student associations, group assignments, classrooms, university related sports, etc. Therefore, we ask that you only share experiences that fit into this context. In addition, we would like to inform you that every question will be followed by an explanation and example of what is meant.

1. **Making Invisible:** Have you ever felt like you were made invisible in a university environment?

Definition:

Making invisible refers to silencing or even marginalizing people of another group or opinion by ignoring them. It makes the individual feel insecure as though what they say is not important in that setting.

Some examples of 'making invisible' are:

- a. Someone starts talking and possibly interrupts you when it is your turn to speak.
- b. Someone takes something that you said and uses it as if it were their idea.
- c. When it is your turn to speak, your peers start to talk to each other, browse through their phones, etc.

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who interrupted you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

2. **Ridicule:** Have you ever felt like you were ridiculed in a university environment?

Definition:

Attempting to manipulate a conversation by portraying the arguments of the other or even the person itself in a ridiculing manner. The individual is mocked or belittled due to characteristics attributed to their gender.

Some examples of 'ridicule' are:

- a. Someone uses expressions to ridicule you based on stereotypes of your gender:
 - i. “You are so emotional”
 - ii. “Did you really come up with that idea? Seems too complicated for someone of your gender.”
- b. Sometimes these expressions include infantilizing you:
 - i. “You are so cute when you get angry”
 - ii. “Oh sweetheart, just calm down”

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who ridiculed you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

3. **Withhold Information:** Have you ever felt like your peers withheld information from you in a university environment?

Definition:

Withholding information happens when an individual is excluded from decision making processes, such as for a group assignment. It may also take place when information is purposely kept from them or important information is exchanged when they are not present.

Some examples of “withholding information” are:

- a. Members of your group assignment make decisions about the project without you being present and do not consult you on the matter.
- b. Members of your group assignment withhold information when you are around, even though it concerns you.

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who did this to you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

4. **Double punishment:** Have you ever felt double punished in a university environment?

Definition:

Regardless of how a person acts, he or she is punished or otherwise belittled for their action, or they are dismissed as unimportant.

Some examples of “Double punishment” are:

- a. You are working on a team assignment. Your members first criticised you for being too quiet, so you spoke up more - but now, they call you bossy.
- b. When you do your group assignment thoroughly, you receive complaints for being too slow. And when you do your group assignment efficiently, you are criticized for not finishing the work properly.

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who did this to you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

5. **Heap blame/put to shame:** Have you ever felt like you were put to shame in a university environment?

Definition:

When someone is put to shame, they are held responsible for something that they are not. In most situations it comes in combination with one of the previously described situations.

Some examples of “Heap blame/put to shame” are:

- a. Someone makes you feel guilty about a situation even though it is not your fault.
- b. Members of your group assignment do not update you on the latest progress of the project. Then, they make you feel ashamed for not understanding certain information, even though you did not have access to the information that they controlled.
 - i. This would be an example of a combination of withholding information and put to shame. First the group did not update you on the project (withholding information). Then, they shamed you for not understanding even though it was not your fault (put to shame).
- c. A member of your group assignment does not do their part of the work. Worried that the deadline is approaching, you end up doing their part last minute. Then, you get blamed for doing a sloppy job, even though it was not your part in the first place.

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who did this to you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

6. **Objectifying:** Have you ever felt like you were objectified in a university environment?

Definition:

To discuss the appearance of an individual in a situation where it is irrelevant, usually to lower the legitimacy of that person.

Some examples of “objectifying” are:

- a. A peer makes a comment about your appearance in a situation where it is irrelevant (in class).
- b. When you question your peer’s part of the assignment, instead of debating about the actual content of the project, they comment on what you are wearing.

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who did this to you? (a male peer, a female peer, staff, etc.)

7. **Force/threat of force:** Has anyone ever threatened to use force towards you in a university environment?

Definition:

The threat or use of physical strength towards you, as well as any kind of harassment, psychological violence, online harassment, etc, as a means to scare or intimidate you. Can be subtle and hard to perceive. An example of a subtle situation is gaslighting.

Gaslighting (psychological violence): a type of manipulation where an individual makes others question their own memory, judgement or perception of a situation, which may lead to low self esteem and second guessing oneself.

Some examples of “force/threat of force” are:

- a. A peer threatens to use physical force or violence against you.
- b. “If you do not shut up, I will get aggressive with you.”
- c. Power imbalance in an abusive friendship.
- d. Gaslighting example: “I never said that and you know it”
- e. Gaslighting example: “Why are you making a big deal out of this? It was not that bad.”

Follow up questions:

- What was the context of the situation/Where did it happen?
- What did you do/How did you react?
- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- Do you wish a third party had intervened?
- Who threatened you or used force against you, a male or female peer or a university staff?