Chapter 11
Female Game Workers, Career Development, and Aspirations

Julie Prescott
University of Bolton, UK

Jan Bogg
University of Liverpool, UK

ABSTRACT

Understanding the career factors that influence women's career aspirations in male-dominated occupations is important for increasing women's progression within these occupations. This chapter assesses the impact of career influencers on career aspirations of women working in the male-dominated computer games industry. An online questionnaire obtained international data from 450 women working in the computer games industry. A structural equation model was employed to investigate the influencers. Findings suggest that to increase women's career development and career aspirations within the computer games industry, self-efficacy, attitudes towards career barriers, work-life balance attitudes, person-environment fit and job satisfaction are crucial.

INTRODUCTION

Within the workforce men and women are segregated into certain occupations, industries and levels. Although women are increasing in the workforce, some jobs are defined as women's jobs and others as men's (horizontal segregation). There is also segregation in the form of working in the lower levels (vertical segregation) within sectors and organisations. Gendered occupational segregation persists in many societies including the USA, Canada, Australia, Europe and the UK despite legislation to counter this. This is evi-

denced through the newer technology industry of computer games development (Prescott & Bogg, 2013). The computer games industry falls within the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) sector. The computer games industry is, however, a relatively new industry or approximately four decades, compared to some of the more established industries within the sector such as engineering. Although women are increasingly becoming gamers, especially more casual gamers their representation as game workers in all aspects of the game development process is limited and they are still on the periphery of the game culture and

industry (Prescott & Bogg, 2014). According to Skillset (2009) women represent just 4% of the UK's computer games industries workforce, a reduction from 12% in 2008.Similar figures have been reported in America (Gourdin, 2005), and Canada (Dyer-Whitheford & Sharman, 2005). Highlighting the need for research into this area in order to understand why this might be the case. There have been a number of reasons put forward as to why women are under represented within the computer games industry. For instance, the lack of flexible working hours, and the long hours culture associated with the industry (Prescott & Bogg, 2010; Consalvo, 2008; Deuze et al, 2007; Haines, 2004; Krotoski, 2004). It can therefore be seen that there are a number of workforce issues associated with the computer games industry especially for the developmental areas of computer games development such as design, production, writing and programming. According to Consalvo (2008), what the games industry needs is to not only increase its diversity, but also change the organisational structures in order to maintain a more diverse workforce. It is therefore important not only to understand why women do not enter or remain within male-dominated industries such as computer games, but also to gain an understanding of women who are working in male-dominated industries.

BACKGROUND

Career Aspirations and Career Development

According to Mayrhofer et. al. (2005):

Career aspirations reflect the strength of an individual's intention to be active in a particular career field. They consist of a cluster of needs, motives and behavioural intentions that individuals articulate with respect to different career fields (p40).

Mayrhofer et al (2005) suggest that career aspirations are a form of self-selection since individual's self-select success in a field dependent on personal strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, career aspirations are particularly important to consider for women in male-dominated occupations since the environment and how individuals feel and are made to feel within that environment can determine the extent of their career aspirations. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), purported by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) developed from Bandura's 1986 social cognitive theory, highlights how career preferences are influenced by self-beliefs, including gender role beliefs and perceived social structures. Since its development, SCCT has been a dominant theory in understanding women's career choice. For instance, research has linked women's perceived barriers as negatively impacting on the career development of women (Lindley, 2005; Swanson & Woitke, 1997).

Career aspirations are important to consider when looking at women's advancement and career development (Mayrhofer et al, 2005). Career aspirations are influenced by many factors including gender, socioeconomic status, race, parent's occupation, educational level and expectations (Domenico & Jones, 2006). Women and men tend to use different kinds of measures for assessing their own career success. Men tend to use more objective measures such as level and salary, whereas women tend to use more subjective measures including satisfaction with their work and non-work lives, which also includes opportunities for advancement and work-life balance (Powell and Butterfield, 2003). Career success can be either subjective or objective (Ng et al, 2005). Objective career success is usually externally measured through things such as highest level attained, highest salary earned, and professional honours. Subjective career successes, on the other hand, are typically attitudes, emotions, or perceptions of how the individual feels about their accomplish-

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