Chapter 6.3
Managerial Careers, Gender, and Information Technology Field

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INTRODUCTION

Careers are organizational and institutional, and they have know-how-based contexts. Managerial careers from a gender perspective, gendered "blind spots" in organizations and the invisibility of women in management have been an object of study since the 1970s. Gender is a part of socially constructed individual identity. Gendered identities in organizations are defined and redefined in relationships as people become socially constructed through work groups, teams and interactions. Because of this social construction, femininity and masculinity grow into human behavior and outlook. Understanding gender as an activity and a term in the making (Calás & Smircich, 1996), it is a constitution of an activity, even when institutions appear to see woman and man as a stable distinction (Korvajärvi, 1998). Beyond work-life and organizations, there are multiple institutional and gendered structures. The information technology (IT) industry and companies are also an institutional construction with gendered dimensions, and they also participate on the creation of femininity and masculinity.

Career can be seen as a conceptual artefact that reflects a culture and rhetorical context in its use. It is a kind of window to a network of values, institutions and functions, where actual careers are made. Usually, the formal organization is based on neutrality and equality, but a closer look reveals the deeper social structures that make it different to women and men. There is a concept of an abstract and neutral worker, and this worker is supposed to be highly competent, work-oriented and available, committed to work-life without any knit to private life. These characteristics support a good career climb in an organizational hierarchy, and many of these characteristics better suit men than women (Metcalfe & Altman, 2001). For instance, home responsibilities make often working hours less flexible for women than men. The notion of an essential person with no gender characteristics does not recognize these issues, whereas taking gender as a research topic shows that work-life as a context differs between women and men.

BACKGROUND

Managerial Positions within the IT Industry

Organizational structures, including managerial positions, are gendered by nature. Overall, there is a high degree of vertical segregation, which means that there are few women in managerial positions compared to men (Acker, 1992). According to the United Nations' *World's Women 2000* report, women's share of the administrative and managerial labor force is less than 30% in all regions of the world. This is true also in Nordic countries, where the participation of women in work life is almost 70% and has a long tradition. Women also hold only 1% to 5% of all the top executive positions (Wirth, 2001), and the numbers seem to change very slowly. In the European Union countries, women's share has barely changed since the early 1990s, and has remained at a less than 5% level (Davidson & Burke, 2000). This division of managerial top positions is called glass-ceiling phenomena, and it exists world wide (Powell, 1999): "The higher the managerial position the fewer the women." As a result of this, women and the highest economic power become separated.

Taking a closer look at the numbers, the least amount of women in top positions are found in male dominated areas, such as heavy industry and construction business, where the amount of female leaders is less than 10%. IT is also a male-dominated field. There are few female directors in an organization that employs mostly men (Kauppinen & Aaltio-Marjosola, 2003). The number of female managers has increased slowly. In many fields, like IT, it is still low (Ahuja, 2002). Women's and men's work in organizations also differ from each other by nature; that means women and men end up doing different kinds of work horizontally.

Current statistics indicate that women account for about 25% of technology workers in the European workforce and about 20% of those in the United States' (U.S.), and that there looks to be a polarization in the type of work women and men do. The majority of women are employed in routine and specialist work, like clerks, while men are engaged in analytical and managerial activities. In the studies, overall 10% of males and only 3% of females within IT had achieved senior managerial positions (Ahuja, 2002). Salary gaps for women and glass-ceiling perceptions are reported as well in this research. Despite that the IT profession has grown in recent years, there remains a gender imbalance and, in some cases, even evidence of a decline in female workforce numbers (Ahuja, 2002).

Managers and leaders have identities that become constructed within special circumstances, and IT constitutes a particular background for identities to grow in. As stated by Davis (1995), organizations and their activities are cultural constructs arising from the masculine vision of the world, and IT's close connections to the male-dominated technology field and its high numbers in male participation makes its connection to masculinity evident. The glass ceiling in the IT field might even be stronger that in others, because there is evidence that women there tend to be stereotyped as staff, the ones who don't take risks, rather than "line" people; whereas men are the innovators and designers (D'Agnostico, 2003; Russell, 2004). This results on men's career outcomes including higher managerial positions.

The segregation of work is based on the classical stereotypes of women's and men's behavior and orientations. Men are oriented towards technical and industrial work, whereas women are engaged in occupations where one needs caring ability and social integration, such as teachers and nurses. Ideals for men's and women's work differ from each other and carry stereotypes (Aaltio, 2002). Women and men are easily valued differently because of their gender. In society, there are different places for women and men, and this holds both in families and in work organizations. Men