Chapter 6

Career Development, Occupational Choice, and Organizational Culture:
Societal Expectations, Constraints, and Embedded Practices

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to: discuss the concept of career motivation; outline the dominant theories for career development and occupational choice; debate how organisational culture can disadvantage women in the workplace and maintain gendered occupational segregation; identify how organisational culture, career motivation, organisational identity, and organisational commitment interlink; review how the interplay between the self, environment, and other external factors reinforces and perpetuates gendered occupational segregation; and discuss how women's career choice is constrained by societal and cultural expectations, based on gender.

INTRODUCTION

Sandler (1986) was the first to use the term "chilly climate" in relation to women's exclusion in the workplace. This is exemplified in the US by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) report 'A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT.' The report found that a common problem across the Institute was academic women's exclusion from PhD committees, group grants, and decision-making (MIT, 1999). A study of women in academic medicine found that 40% of ranked sex discrimination as number 1 out of

11 factors, hindering their careers in that field (Carr et al, 2003). In support of this, Stratton et al (2005) found that fourth-year medical students', who had experienced or observed discrimination, were more likely to report that the experience influenced their choice of specialty. General surgery was the area in which women were most likely to experience discrimination during residency.

The organizational climate influences job satisfaction and intention to leave. For example women often report less job satisfaction and a greater desire to quit their job (i.e. see Settles et al., 2007). Our research in the UK found that

women academics perceived they had less discussion with senior staff members outside of the annual review process, than male colleagues. This reflects Ginther & Kahn's (2006) findings that women are less likely to feel a sense of belonging in their departments or discussions about promotion. Astoundingly, Gersick et al (2000) found that academic men were three times more likely to report receiving career help from colleagues and that men reported sharing strategies to win reputation games, whereas women reported having to gain male approval to even play the game (Gersick et al., 2000). The gendered milieu of higher education is likely both a cause and reflection of women's underrepresentation across the profession. Research in academia has reported a variety of gender issues, including the fact that academic men are more likely than women to achieve a greater number of publications and be more satisfied with teaching load and progression opportunities. Further, men more readily apply for promotion and become more professionally successful (i.e. White, 2004; Toutkoushian et al 2007; Boreham et al 2008; Monroe et al 2008). As research is often rewarded more than teaching and men publish more peer-reviewed papers than women, male progression is not surprising. Generally, men tend to have less pastoral student duties. Interestingly, Leahy (2006) noted that gender differences in publication rates reduce when pastoral care, teaching load and non-refereed publications are also considered.

The National Academy of Sciences (2007) has stated "it is not lack of talent, but unintentional biases and outmoded institutional structures that are hindering the access and advancement of women in these fields" (p. 1). It is important to remember that occupational choice is often linked to other life decisions, such as having children or geographical location. Indeed, Benbow et al. (2000) has noted that the decision often involves a multitude of factors to consider such as marriage, children and living near relatives as well as

the occupation itself. Building ones career takes time and women continue to play a greater role in child rearing, resulting in less time to invest in career. In STEM fields, this is likely to have a significant impact on career progression. Ginther & Kahn (2006), in a US study, found that female academics in science, engineering, and technology are less likely to obtain tenure (29% of women compared to 58% of men). They also reported that only a fifth of the women, compared to half of the men were likely to achieve the rank of full professor. Monroe et al (2008) found that 85% of full professors, with more than 10 years in their field were male (Monroe et al., 2008).

Many Universities are in a process of change with restructuring, competition for student international and national recruitment and research assessment for funding (i.e. in the UK, results from the REF, formally known as the RAE are linked to research funding). Universities are urging academics to publish in prestigious (high impact factor) journals. The competition for external grants is now fiercer than ever and external grants are one crucial way for an academic to buy in support from postgraduate students or casual staff for course teaching support. This "virtuous circle" then frees the academic from teaching, providing them with more research time. Research chairs may also be 'head hunted' or recruited, with negotiated salaries (off pay scales) and often reduced or no teaching load. This system has created and continues to support, a gendered labor market in academia between male centered research and female centered teaching.

In this chapter, we will discuss career motivation and some dominant theories of career development and occupational choice. This will provide context in relation to gendered occupational segregation and women working in male dominated occupations. We will also discuss the influence of organizational culture, identity and commitment on the individual at work and its implications for women.

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