

## Chapter 8

# Issues Career Women Face

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter considers the issues women generally face in their careers and in particular in ICT and SET careers. The chapter discusses the barriers women can face in their careers and the drivers that can enable women to advance and progress in their careers. This discussion includes a review of mentoring and networking and illustrates the gender divide in access to mentors and networking opportunities. The chapter also considers work-life balance issues, which are particularly important for women working in male-dominated occupations and industries. It considers women's lack of visibility in male-dominated occupations and industries and discusses the leaky pipeline and the factors that can aide retention and plug the pipeline for women.*

### INTRODUCTION

*You will be amused that when Mr. Dulles said goodbye to me this morning he said 'I feel I must tell you that when you were appointed I thought it terrible and now I think your work here has been fine!' So, against the odds the women inch forward, but I'm rather old to be carrying on the fight. (Eleanor Roosevelt to Joseph Lash, February 13, 1946)*

Career women face a number of issues in the workplace, this is particularly the case for women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) where women remain outnumbered by men. This can have far reaching implications for recruitment and retention. Servon and Visser (2011) found from their research with 2,493 women in SET careers in the private sector that 23% of participants felt that women in their roles were held in

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low regard, particularly in the Engineering and Technology sector. Worryingly, over 50% of the women reported experiencing sexual harassment at work. A third of the women reported feeling extremely isolated at work and many felt that they were not progressing in their career. This would suggest that the 'leaky pipeline' is as active as it is in the academic sector. Our own research would support Servon and Visser's (2011) findings, as feelings of stagnation and isolation, suggest there may be a lack of women to aspire to in similar roles and potentially a lack of mentoring or support networks. In addition, due to the gendering of certain occupations and roles, feelings of 'not fitting in' may encourage women to adopt masculine traits in order to better 'fit in'. As we have suggested throughout this book, throughout the SET industries, in both the public and private sector in order to successfully recruit and retain women, the culture of the organisation must evolve to accommodate women. This chapter will focus on the issues facing women in the workplace, whilst they are not all unique to SET, they all have a powerful influence on the progression of women in male dominated occupations.

## **CAREER BARRIERS AND DRIVERS**

The issue of gender bias and its implications in the world of work is ongoing. Women continue to be disadvantaged and can remain invisible in the workplace when it comes to recognition for achievement. Research has demonstrated that women's scientific achievements are often undervalued and

unrewarded. For example, Lincoln et al. (2012) analyzed the composition of award committees, given by 13 societies from science, technology, engineering, and medicine (STEM), and found that women made up only 19.5% of the average award committee. They found that while awards to women increased by 78.5% between 2000 to 2010, women won only 10% of research-based awards and were more successful in gaining service awards (32%) or teaching awards (37%). Interestingly, men were more than eight times likely, to win a scholarly award and almost three times more likely to win a young investigator award. We support the researchers conclusions, in that as women were much more successful in gaining service and scholarship awards than men, there appears a perception that scientific scholars are men and women teachers or service providers and potentially incongruent with the scientist role. Such gender bias is notable and may be institutionally gendered in terms of what roles women and men play in science as we have discussed throughout this book. Implicit bias in award, selection and nomination committees requires consideration and potentially training of members to avoid unconscious bias. This would equally be of benefit in job selection and promotion committees.

Lack of women is reflected in academic writing, it is apparent that women authors are missing from leading publications, where it can influence dissemination of results, the impact of the research and career progression. This includes writing in leading scientific journals. For example, recently Conley and

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