

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

The Challenges Female Science Faculty Report to Their Socialization and Advancement: A Preliminary Data Analysis

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Abstract

This paper is a preliminary analysis of a qualitative, action-research study that addresses work experiences of under-represented science faculty at a mid-sized, regional, primarily undergraduate institution. This paper addresses the potential for women to accomplish their desired career goals, perceived career success and satisfaction, and how these result in organizational, systemic, and interpersonal barriers.

This work-in-progress needs much work yet, including a stronger theoretical base and feedback for continued development. Data have already been collected from 16 female science (and 1 racial minority male) faculty with more interviews planned. Faculty who are in their early to mid-career are the primary focus.

Prior campus research demonstrated that mid-career female faculty found it difficult to move beyond associate professor because of heavy service burdens (e.g., advising, serving as department chairs or program directors). This resulted in fewer course releases and research grants to provide them the time to invest in research. This study supports those findings and identifies a system where “the rich get richer” and where it’s difficult for women to access positions of power to make important systemic change. Additional preliminary themes address workloads, mentoring, contradictions of valuing research over teaching, and “support that’s unsupportive.”