The Leaky Pipeline and Age Discrimination

European Gender Summit

Dr Kate White
Adjunct Research Fellow
School of Education and Arts
Director, WHEM Network
A scientific career in 21st Century

Australian experience - age and science careers:

• Progression as early career researcher can be accelerated by mobility; difficult for some women
• The “rush hour” (Caprile, 2012; also Cory, 2011) when career and family collide for women in early 30s
• Becoming an independent researcher depends on networks/ mobility/mentoring – gender differences
• 40 papers by 40 to be awarded a senior fellowship
• Career plateauing (Riordan, 2011) of some over 50s
Australian science funding model

• Most funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
• Funding decisions often random (Graves et al., 2011)
• Lack of job security
• No effective assessment of output relative to opportunity
• No separate funding for career interruptions
## Leaky Pipeline: Australian case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational category</th>
<th>Total Employees /students 2011</th>
<th>Total Employees /students 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Fellows</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Officers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Officers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD Students</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Passion for “doing science”

- Passionate and single-minded – akin to a religious vocation
- This ‘ideal scientist’ a ‘monastic male’ with no other responsibility than “doing science” i.e. normative male model of a scientist (Moir, 2006) – impact on perception of the model of a women scientist
Women just as passionate about science
Generational change and gender

Most significant finding:
• The construct of masculinity on which science excellence is based is out-dated
• More fluid roles for women and men emerging
• Both younger women and men reject overt gender discrimination
Generational change
Generational change and gender

• Younger women challenging gendered organisational culture/funding model in order to balance work/family/career progression; some delayed having children
• Others chose to return to work part-time and insisted that managers/colleagues respect their decision and not ‘side-line’ them
• Younger men challenging organisational culture – reject competitive funding model; juggling work/dual careers/children; or wish to work less when they have children
Respect and support for working part-time
New inclusive models

• Political imperative to keep young women and men in science research to increase Australian competitiveness/innovation
• Reform of funding model overdue
• Support from Institute for women and men for flexible work models
• Leadership from supervisors critical in developing new models of “doing science”
New models needed for science careers

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed
Conclusion

Basic science research careers gendered:

• Women with family responsibilities experience less support and greater challenges than men in building careers
• Single women/women with families can also experience direct/indirect discrimination in relation to work practices and networking
• Younger women and men reject the science construct of masculinity, seek new models