ABSTRACT

CAREER CHANGES OF ISRAELI WOMEN

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Recently there has been an increase in the number of men and women who change their career track. Formerly, people were less mobile in terms of changing their occupational role. They prepared themselves for one occupation, which they usually held till retirement. Career models, developed mainly during the seventies, were usually based on the assumption of one career, starting in the twenties of a person's life and lasting till retirement. Yet in today's reality, people change direction in their careers and even change their lifestyle more than ever before.

What characterizes women's career considerations? The theory of careers treats the person who chooses a career as an individual, disregarding the family. This model is more suitable to men, who can expect their families to adjust to the results of their career choices. However, a woman's life is anchored much deeper in her family, and her career choice is more limited, out of consideration for it. The assumption is that a woman's demands of her working life are much lower than those afforded to man.

The Ph.D. dissertation examined models of women's career changes; i.e., the factors affecting the second, salaried career, and the demands, salary and status of this career. Generally, the study examined the effect of variables affecting men's careers (human resources and experience, plans and ambitions, social networks); and the effect of variables termed "family constraints" affecting women's careers. The hypothesis was that women's and men's careers are affected by the same variables, with an addition of some variables for women: those related to the family sphere.

The study examined the second career of Israeli regular army women, who are forced to make a career change in midlife as they must retire from the military at the age of forty.

The main finding is related to variables in the family sphere:

The hypothesis was that women's search of employment and their investment in a career are affected by family status, number and age of children at home, and family support. This group of variables was termed "family constraints."

Contrary to expectations, it was found that the same variables affect both men and women's second career after leaving regular military service. No effect was found for variables related to the family sphere on the second career of women or its characteristics.

The second, civilian career was characterized in this study on the basis of three indicators: salary, status, and the level of demands. The status and level of demands were measured against the military role. The salary was measured in absolute terms.

It was found that the variables of family constraints do not affect the existence of a second career; they also do not affect the salary level of this career, its status or its level of demands.
Thus the hypothesis, according to which models of careers dealing only with a man's world are not applicable to a woman's world, is inappropriate. The variables predicting men's and women's second career are similar.

Three types were found among women looking for a career:

- The woman who is looking for a challenging career
- The woman who is looking for a career affording security and continuity
- The woman who is looking for a comfortable career.

The woman who is looking for a challenging career finds herself making the same level of investment in her career as does a man. Yet, there is a gap between military women’s ambitions about a second career and reality, from the point of view of the characteristics of the civilian career. In most cases, the status and the salary of the second career are lower than those of the first. The same opportunities are open to men and women military personnel, according to the research - but only to women motivated toward a challenging career. Only these women gain social rewards in the form of salary and status similar to those they had in the military.

In summary, the research indicated that similarly to men, family constraints are not relevant for women in the second career.

It also appears that a woman looking for a challenging career acts in the labor market in the same fashion as does a man, in respect to the demands of the job. She also expects a similar reward to that of a man, in salary and status.