

Inclusion through disidentification: Negotiating Organizational Gender Barriers

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Abstract

Using a blend of life course (Elder 1994;1999) and work course (Spaeth and Kosmala 2009) as a framing perspective, this study presents three stories of three women's journeys in architecture practice in Scotland. Aged 78, 50 and 29, these women describe through their experiences revealing particular ways of practice and patterns of working over a period of time, offering insights into the processes of identification and disidentification (Butler 1993;1999) with the collective body of professional architects often as a means to develop creative distance as well as to assert themselves as individually significant members of the profession. The kinds of social meanings encoded in the language that describes their work and the work environment provide further understanding about ways in which practicing women architects negotiate the workplace challenges facing them. The ways in which these women see themselves part of, and apart from the collective identity of architects, helps us to understand the mechanisms by which individuals exercise agency and assert themselves within their work environments.

Keywords: Disidentification, Identity, Social Construction, Architects, Organizational Identity

Introduction

In Scotland, no other profession besides engineering is as dominated by men as architecture (Spaeth and Kosmala 2009:7), where women represent less than 10% of the total practitioners, despite the fact that 45% of students entering architectural schools are women.

Marcella et al (2006) examined equality policy implementation and operation in creative work in Scotland from the perspective of employer and employees revealing a continued under-representation of women in senior positions and decision-making roles in the Scottish creative sectors. The authors pointed out that on the whole, women tend to occupy administration roles, and refer to a prevalence of "old-boy networks". The authors suggest that tacit and significant barriers for success, including nepotism and cronyism in terms of obtaining employment, funding, and enhancing visibility, inhibit the potential for promotion for those women, or men, negotiating the more fluid career paths of creative workers.

The architecture profession, a sector of the creative industries, has long been dominated by men. This does not mean however that women have not become architects. Women make up between 25 and 50 per cent of the student population in architectural schools in Europe, Australia and the United States. The majority of them complete degrees and earn certifications to practice architecture. Studies in the UK and Australia (de Graft-Johnson et al 2003; Fowler and Wilson 2004; Whitman 2005; Caven 2006) have sought to find reasons, therefore, for why women leave architecture. While low pay has deterred men and women alike from practicing architecture,

deGraft-Johnson et al (2003) cite women architects who describe the profession as having a predominantly male identity reflected in what they describe as arrogance, bullying, and misogyny. These factors “contribute to gradual erosion of confidence and de-skilling, leading to reduced self-esteem and poor job satisfaction’ (RIBA 2003).

We live in a society where a long history of masculine-based cultures and ideas result in a perpetuation of a dominant common sense (Connell, 2005), in ways of expression (Carter and Marlow, 2007) as well as in accepted norms and regulations tied to the way men are accustomed to acting and doing things (Hearn et al 2010). Collinson and Hearn (1996) identified a variety of men-related discourses that characterize organizational and managerial cultures, under the umbrella of multiple masculinities.

Literature has shown that creative practitioners, including architects, require flexible forms of working and of non-restrictive environments to facilitate creation and the collaborations that go beyond routine and limits imposed by workplace hierarchies (e.g. Kosmala 2007; Scott 1995). Still, architecture as a profession, as the women in this small sample corroborate, does not provide the kind of flexibility that might serve not only to break down some of the cultures still dominated by traditionally male discourse, but to facilitate a creative environment where well-trained men and women can contribute their talents to the profession. The kinds of social meanings encoded in the language that describes their work and the work environment provide further understanding about ways in which practicing women architects negotiate the workplace challenges facing them.

By mapping dimensions of representations of work-related identities in their stories, we seek also to broaden constructs of individual identification in architecture as it may be formed through iterations of enacting and decoupling with representations of professional identity, and to gain further insight into the motivations held by these women to assert their individual agency in architectural practice, as a means to secure their place in a profession that has been dominated by ‘malestream-oriented organizational discourse’ and practice for nearly 200 years, maintaining the persistence and valorization of dominant masculine order (Connell 2005; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; 2000).

In this paper, we theorise occupational identification and disidentification as a reflexive process revealed through narrative biography which, when set against concepts of collective identity help us to grasp the import of an individual’s desire to negotiate career as a means to maintain some association, however distant, with a professional identity. What, exactly, they may be negotiating is also situated in historical-biographical contexts. Therefore, the second part of this paper, briefly reviews the dimensions of life course within the context of work course (Spaeth and Kosmala 2009) offering an opportunity to reveal a work history narrative that provides clearer understanding of the “ongoing processes through which social and personal identity is produced” (Hockey and James 2003). The reflexive processes revealed in these narratives may be added to enrich the meanings of other narratives of architects already recorded in the context of gender and work literature (Caven 2006; de Graft-Johnson et al 2003; Fowler and Wilson 2004). Finally, we offer implications for an enriched use of narrative analysis by demonstrating that generational contexts provide a retrospective lens through which we can view individual work-course related decisions in a single profession over many decades.

Identifying by Disidentifying

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) got its start mid-way into the 19th century. Its founders were keen to formalize the profession and made no apology for its exclusionary nature from the start. In order to define what architects were, they would, by excluding certain individuals from membership, say what architects were not. This included builders, and in fact, women. According to Antony (2001) “women were barred from entry into architecture ‘for their own good’ because of the fear that women in architects’ offices would lead to the dreaded ‘comingling of the sexes’” (p.55). Both working class and upper class women were engaged in aspects of the building trade, but were invisible in the annals of history. ¹

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler (1993) introduces the notion of identification and disidentification as a simultaneous process where an individual both embraces and resists an identity or an association with an organization that may signify one’s identity in some manner. Butler implies the added notion of misrecognition. Misrecognition can be twofold. First, the architecture discourse misrecognises particular forms of practice already acknowledged in normative terms by architects. This means that it may not be self-evident to an architect or to the professional collective that the socially constructed identity of the profession reflects discourse that has become the norm of the organization even if the discourse itself doesn’t fully match the identity that some or all of its individuals recognize. Second, if an individual assumes for one reason or another that she or he does not “fit” or match the collective identity, this individual may experience an uneasiness that leads to disidentification and distancing and may even be mis-recognized by others in the collective. Individuals wanting to be recognized or identified as a member of the collective then must seek to identify again in some way with the collective.

Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1999), does not actually use the term “disidentification”. She argued that if our gender is socially constructed then regardless of the potential fictionality of the notion of gender, it remains constructed. Somewhat provokingly, she asks “What possibilities exist by *virtue* [*sic*] of the constructed character of sex and gender?” (Butler 1999:42). It became apparent during the analysis, that these women’s stories, representing three different generations in time, reflected what Butler (1999) described as “the subversive operation of identifications’ (p.40) and point at creative distancing, forming space for individual navigation of work-course overtime. It is a process of simultaneous identification and disidentification. Medina (2003) describes this identification and disidentification process as characteristically and “necessarily” unstable, reflecting the intrinsically heterogeneousness of identity (p. 657).

In this paper, the processes of disidentification refer to and are associated with gendered nature of work, reflecting upon discourses of architecture practice. When a group of men, calling themselves architects, gathered 160 years ago to say “we are not builders” and “we are not women”, their intent to refine their collective identity went beyond a neutral clarification to something more antagonistic. Dean (2008) calls this latter form of disidentification, “counter-identification”. But disidentification does not reject other identities; instead, it resists already

¹ Under the helm of a female president for the first time in its history in 2009 and now the second elected for 1 September 2011, the RIBA is seeking to attract younger members who are less “stuffy” (<http://www.architecture.com/JoinTheRIBA/JoinTheRIBA.aspx>). Applicants for chartered membership of the Royal Incorporation of Architects of Scotland (RIAS), like RIBA applicants, must be currently registered with the Architects Registration Board (ARB) which is the only body in the UK that is allowed to prescribe the qualifications needed to become an architect. Based on an applicant’s having passed three educational and experience-based hurdles called Parts I, II, and III which generally takes an individual 7-9 years to complete from the time he or she begins architectural school, the ARB registration takes, on average, 6 months to process.

established identities while reintegrating them into a new or different identity, in order to “re-describe those possibilities that *already* [sic] exist” (Butler, 1999, p.189). Those individuals who appear to disidentify may leave a work situation particularly if they do not feel that they fit the dominant performance of that setting. If these individuals are also members of a particular profession, such as architecture, they may avoid affiliation with a particular architectural firm, but they do not *per se* leave the professional affiliation to which they are attached through a collective professional identity.

Work-related norms and culture form a ‘nexus’ of values and practices which ‘makes’ performance more predictable, that is, more manageable in a domain of work. Kosmala and Herrbach (2006) expanding on the identity management process (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) argued that in addition to individually and socially rooted patterns of ideas and discourses, work-related discourse itself facilitates identity regulation.

Through an iterative process of both identifying and disidentifying with the institutional and corporate representations of architects, the women in this study negotiate, and regulate over time, their careers and their personal identities as architects. Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) suggest that incongruities between the self and the collective identity of the organization create “torment” and foster ambivalence. Rizzo, House & Lirtzman (1970) refer to intrarole conflict that may result from work-related stress or dissatisfaction. In the context of a professional collective identity defined by a trade association, such as the RIBA or the RIAS, the process of disidentification from those professional identities that do not match one’s individual aspirations and individual patterns of working is a means to define one’s occupational identity and reflexively, re-formulates one’s identity in relation to and still somewhat within the collective. Where do disidentifiers who want to remain in the architecture go?

Caven’s (2006) study of 49 women architects in the East Midlands sought to “probe their identity with the profession” (p. 459). Despite the fact that the East Midland study included women between the ages of 27 and 72, the analysis of the data focused on a holistic view of their aggregate experiences as a means to underscore, importantly, the continued masculinity of the profession and the inherent devaluation of the contribution of women architects to the field.

In our study, through the retrospective histories told by three women from three different generations, we ask similar questions to those in the Caven study, but the analysis of data sought to grasp the individual particular circumstances in the narratives in the 75 year history they represent. In the similarities between stories, we can make greater assumptions about the status quo of the profession –those aspects of its collective identity that have not changed, such as..... In the differences, we can turn more easily to historical constructs that reflect the time in which each woman was born to determine what changes has become apparent within the profession and its practice.

Looking at work course over three generations

In this study, the life course (Elder 1994) perspective is used to gain insight into three individual’s lives. The insights, while not generalizable over larger populations, do provide a deep characterization of three women architects, ages 78, 50 and 29 who were interviewed with the objective to understand their perceived work identities in the larger context of their profession. Independently, their stories reveal the complex interplay between being an architect

and working as an architect. Collectively, their stories represent not only three narrations-in-one, but also point at ambiguities of distant identification with a professional collective identity.

Elder (1994) describes life course as the “interplay of human lives and historical times, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency in choice making” (Elder 1994:5). What Elder (1994) describes as the personal implications of the interplay between life course dimensions have collective implications as well. Organizations, because of their linked social nature become repositories for the cumulative historical constructions of their members.

Changing socio-historical constructions lead to changing forms of social acceptance and exclusion. Individuals carry with them the constructions of different historical periods, may share similar life course circumstances with each other, but even when they appear to make similar decisions during their work courses, their ways of choosing are often dictated by circumstances related to their social and familial networks, their age, their location, timing of events, by cultural, historical and geographical boundaries, and by their own individual human agency. This life course perspective (Elder 1994) extends notions of life span and developmental cognitive and behavioural psychology. It does not fully discount them, but it iterates the importance and relevance of non-temporal events. Often, life course studies are conducted longitudinally among age cohorts in order to gain fuller temporal perspectives as well (Elder 1994). Such longitudinal studies generally follow individuals or groups over time in order to gain a greater depth of understanding for the entire sample and “advances in statistical techniques are enabling studies to model this process” (Elder 1999:18). But it is also possible to use the life course perspective as a means to actually shift away from age cohort specific studies that, even when longitudinal, often lack information about earlier stages in an individual’s life (Elder 1999). Narratives in this perspective can tell us something about a person within a population as well as that person’s relationship to her or his social environment. When the narrations span several generations, we gain additional insights that one might normally seek out via longitudinal cohort studies as a means to understand change over time.

The empirical data in this study is organized using a life course perspective which takes into consideration the interplay and timing of lives, influence of historical events, social networks including family, and individual agency in making decisions. This perspective has guided the kinds of questions asked which elicit a semi-structured biographical narrative. The research focusses on the professional careers of these architects, not their entire life course, so rather than refer to their “career” we use the word “work course” as a means to distinguish, or *disidentify* from discourse that reflects masculine linear forms of career.

Brewer and Gardner (2004) suggest that collective identity is a consequence of social connections that are either personal, impersonal or both. Collective identities do not have to be a function of a formal organization. In fact, the collective identity of architects is derived more from the impersonal bonds between members than personal bonds, reflecting what Brewer and Gardner (2004) suggest is typical of a common identification with a symbolic group. The processes of identifying with the architectural profession is somewhat symbolic; architects must register with an architectural association and receive certification in order to maintain the titles and rights of practice. It is this association and body of members that dictate to a high degree the collective identity of architects which, in the unfolding narratives, reflects only a part of how these women see themselves in their practice.

Method and Data Collection

This qualitative study uses narratives from three of ten interviews conducted with architects practicing in Scotland for the purpose of a broader PhD research investigation into the constructed identities of architects in Scotland. The ten architects interviewed between 2009-2011, both men and women, represent large and small as well as public and private practices in the north, south, east and west of the country. Each in-depth semi-structured interview is based on a life course perspective approach within what is referred to as the work course as a means of distinguishing the irregular work patterns of architects from more linear work trajectories implied in career discourse (Myer 2009). Each interview lasted 55-65 minutes, was audio and video recorded, and transcribed at word-level (Edwards 2003) indicating for pauses, some accents, coughs, laughter, and interruptions. Three of the interviews, those used for this paper, proved particularly interesting in that when they were attended to linearly and taken into consideration chronologically, they appeared to represent three distinct voices speaking about one occupation from a woman's perspective over a single span of history dating from 1938 to 2010. Preliminary coding of the transcriptions revealed thematic patterns related to specific instances of identification and disidentification by all three women as a means to negotiate their work courses to accommodate choices related to practicing independently, interacting with professional colleagues, and caring for children while asserting as meaningfully as possible their identities as architects.

The iterative process of identification and disidentification is apparent in the narratives of all three women. Each woman describes a kind of becoming of an architect, both in the collective sense of a shared identity with other architects and in the individual sense of her own journey. In this becoming, the choices with which she is confronted and/or makes serve to define this process of identification and disidentification. How the process differs in these narratives reflects very much the historical as well as geographic plane to which the woman protagonist in each story is a part. How the process compares seems to reflect that which is shared not only among them, but among architects, as they wish to be defined, as a collective whole and how women, within that collective whole, share another collective view which they have negotiated in similar ways through forms of disidentification from some of their male colleagues.

The oldest, to whom we refer as Mag, is 78 and lives in the west of Scotland. While she no longer practices architecture, she is active in a number of architecture-related organizations and preservation groups as well as a women's advocacy group. One middle-aged woman, Flo, is 50 and lives in the east of Scotland. She has worked within other practices but today owns and runs a practice with 8 architects. And finally, we hear from the youngest of the three women, Sun, who is 29 and practicing with full license since 2006. She lives in the north of Scotland in the country with her pre-school aged daughter and runs a solo practice.

Mag, 78 - "I was steeped in the business"

Asked why she became an architect, Mag, aged 78 replies: "I became an architect because my father was an architect". It is not unusual for children to identify with the profession of one or both of their parents. In the case of architects, the model for generational succession is typically a father or grandfather. Mag began her architecture training just after WWII. She describes a few women who attended university with her and then mentioned that ultimately it was just a couple of girls and the rest "*fellows returning from the forces*" (other than one or two who came

"*straight in*"). Others had to have a year apprenticeship before school, but because her father was an architect, she had "apprenticed" at home.

"... And he [father] said that for a girl it was far too long a course going into an office and attending evening classes, and he thought it would be better if I did the full time course....."

There had not been any women in the class directly preceding Mag's year, but when she began, there were four enrolled of the 30 or so total first year students.

Mag does not offer much information about her male class colleagues. She names the women from school however in very personal terms and described one of the four women in her class who moved to London to school. Very early in the interview, Mag used language that suggested import to the group of women starting architectural school together: "So she left us so we had this, uh, very few women and mostly all men back from the forces." Mag doesn't say, "she left". She says "she left us", as though to suggest a form of betrayal on the part of the classmate. Twice she referred to the male classmates as having entered directly following their return from war. It was not unusual for men to come directly from the forces into college following WWII, but Mag's repetition of the fact serves to underscore a kind of identity shared by these male architects-to-be. They were not simply new students like the rest of them; they carried a work identity already and a heroic one as well.

To marry at that time, according to Mag, was to forfeit your right to practice in a private firm as a woman. Women were allowed to work within the local authorities, hence; of the few women practicing in Scotland, the majority worked in the public sector. She describes a third year female student who, after securing partial qualification, left to get married. "That did not please Professor Smith one little bit" she added. Mag worked for 3 years in the local authority before marrying in the late 50s. She stayed home for 13 years to raise two children and "carried out private commissions" from the house. Without understanding the custom and law of the times, it would be easy to ask why Mag would not refer to "work" in the home, but the concept of a woman's starting a business was also incongruous with the law. Legal discourse, therefore, will influence work discourse and in turn become a part of Mag's discourse identity—how she uses language and how she thinks, even after the laws have changed. Even if women embraced notions of working in the home when it became "appropriate" to do so, the memory and potential stigma of earlier social constructions are not always easy to shake.

Within the discourse we can readily see Mag's simultaneous identification with being an architect and a woman, including challenging the male dominance of the management team using language that metaphorically signifies her view of the situation where the male/storm is out of any proper proportion to the calm (but perhaps darker/impenetrable) waters of the female/teacup. She also adds that she was "used to being in total control" suggesting that this event did not reflect her overall experience on sites. She relates a time when a housing management person criticizes a controlled entry panel on a housing project:

"... anyway, he must have gone back and complained to his overseer or his boss or something that THAT woman out there was being difficult [laughs]. And my, er (.) the principle architect called me into his office, he said; um, what was that all about? I said; you mean the storm in the teacup. [laughter] However, I got a ticking off. He says; you have to defer to them, you know. It's the politics of the game."

Flo, 50: “I got architecture”.

Flo was born about the time Mag married. There were no architects in Flo’s family, however. She grew up in a family of lawyers. At high school, her history teacher was appointed to assign careers to students. When Flo’s parents heard that Flo “got architecture” they agreed that it was a perfect fit. Coming originally from Northern Ireland, however, Flo encountered a culture in Scotland that she described as less open to the notion of women attending architecture school.

"A lot of them weren't very keen to have me because their view was that women got married and had children and it was a waste of seven years of your life learning all this. So I said; well, that's ridiculous, but in the end I went and there were four girls at first year at university and I was the only one who got... made it into second year, the others were all... a lot of people didn't make it into second year in those days. So I was the only girl in the year of, I think, maybe thirty five or thirty or something."

Flo describes her first year in architecture school in the context of being a minority, but she emphasizes her belongingness, her identification with the group:

"it didn't make any difference, they were all right. . .we were all great pals and I was. . . I had as many male friends as female friends so it didn't make any difference. And I did very well so. . ."

Being successful in school became for Flo an important criterion for adapting as an architect and becoming an architect. She called herself “lucky” in learning how to do technical drawings and in “catching on”-- presumably because so many architectural students are, like Mag, children of architects and Flo was not.

Following school, Flo worked 3 years in a practice, got her Part 3 qualification, was married, and decided to “start my own practice from home”. Asked why she wanted to start her own firm, she replied, “I can’t remember. I just must have been a nut. I can’t remember”. The narrative of her work course reflects in fact a less conscious awareness of why she made choices other than to compete for projects and to negotiate financial recessions. The degree to which her competitive nature was fueled by a disidentification with the male hegemony of the practice, which she describes in oblique terms, or fueled by her brothers and father who were lawyers, is difficult to tell, but the narrative itself brings the question to mind. After starting her own firm, she merged practices on several occasions to take advantage of opportunities to secure projects she wanted. Through the mergers she became a partner in a large firm for 7 years prior to leaving and starting the firm that she runs today:

“we did a lot of exciting jobs and it was good and it was easier, funnily enough, it was good, it was just the right move at the right time. And then, had enough of that because. . . not because I wanted to move but because the two partners. . .they always had the company and they weren’t going to give any of it away, and they started doing a lot of. . . there were certain issues I couldn’t ever accept. They spent a lot of time doing their own development and didn’t contribute as much as say I would to the. . .I felt, to the partnership. So it was never going to work out as an equal. .

It would be impossible to say whether gender played a direct role in Flo’s difficulty to assert herself in the practice and then to start a new company. Throughout the interview, Flo identifies closely with the architectural profession through the satisfaction she derives from what she describes as “successful work.” She disidentifies in other ways that reflect her competitive nature. In talking about a particular project of which she is proud she says it “*will fit, really fit well, um*

as opposed to [pause] just having a very arrogant philosophy as a lot of architects do, you know, that's their big thing. . ." She says that her firm does not have a design style, "just good design". By this she means that their firm attempts to tailor jobs to the customer and implies that some architects impose a design ego on their customers instead. Later, however, she comments that "we as architects like buildings that a lot of the public don't like."

Flo reveals more iterations of identification/disidentification with the collective profession when asked about her participation in professional conferences:

"None of us, um, but we would go if there was a good lecture and if it was nearby. But the thought of going to spend [coughs] four days with architects up in wherever it was. . .where was it?"

Later she returned to the subject of conferences in the context of providing CPD for her employees and said:

"Well no, it's just going to a conference for three days and having to socialize with other architects doesn't exactly enthrall me, however, I bet you I go next year or something and I think it's great and why didn't I do this years ago so. . ."

Flo is quick to point out that she is not someone who likes socializing per se, but her discourse reflects numerous inconsistencies with regard to her own relationship with the profession as well as with gender. In describing her hiring decisions, she reveals as much by what she does not say as by what she does say:

". . .a while ago, about two years, I decided I wasn't going to have. . .it wasn't a good idea if. . .I think I had too many females the. And I though, mmm, I think I'll get. . .but it was difficult when I started off because, you see, I didn't have [coughs] . . .everybody in those days, five years, five and a half years ago [coughs] could get a job as an architect anywhere, so here's this female who's about to, um, who started her own practice, put an advert in the paper, would you go to a new practice that you didn't have any confidence of what the future was in? [pause] Of course, there's no opp. . .and to a female, a lot of guys wouldn't want a female as a boss. So I wouldn't want to employ people who had that view anyway so. . ."

Flo's narrative reflects her expressed desire to be open and fair with employment but she is cognizant of the issues of new business as well as with her own and others' perceptions of gendered identity. Her narrative identity becomes a blend of these conflictual awarenesses and her pragmatic determination to be a supportive and "good" boss and architect.

Post WWII saw a small rise in the number of women in technical schools and universities, but by the 1970s, Flo was among the few women who were enrolling. It was not until the 90s that architecture schools began to see a slow but steady rise in female enrolments.

Sun, 29 "Intended to become a scientist"

Sun, a 29 year old women from the northeast of Scotland, intended to become a scientist. She was "good in school". At age 16, she travelled to Germany on an exchange program and fell in love with a young architecture student who persuaded her to pursue architecture because of her interest in both the arts and sciences. Already accepted to study science at Edinburgh, she was not allowed to reapply elsewhere and had to accept a placement at a technical college. "A few of my friends said-- well it's a good job you didn't meet a bin man."

Sun's narrative is filled with stories that reveal her admitted search for an identity as an architect. She defined herself more often as what she knew she was not than what she was or could be. In architectural school she "didn't fit in" and "didn't do things the way other people did them". She never indicated at any time that her fitting in had anything to do with gender however. She wanted to talk about "serious things," and enjoyed "great debates" with a close friend. She and her friend felt that "*there was that sense of; tsk, those girls, they're just talking about nails and boys and we want to get to the heart of it*" [laughs]. She had spent several years in Austria first studying via Erasmus and then in an office where her boss told her that her architecture school should have been bombed and that she was useless. When she returned to Scotland she felt even less in common with her fellow students. Her own age cohort had moved on as well.

"I was thinking of taking more time out to try and sort it out and he [a mentor of hers] just kind of told me to stick with it [laughs].

Sun had discovered some "solidarity" as she called it with other European architectural students on several trips—one to Sarajevo from Austria just after the war there and then to Scandinavia. Through her travels, tumultuous personal relationships, and struggles to actually belong to the architectural profession while disidentifying with her peers in Scotland, she discovered an affinity for ecological, sustainable architecture. Referring to different peer groups that were formed on her trip to Norway, she said, "*I joined the group that was sort of interested in the connection between nature, land and architecture and art. . .*"

The process of identifying and disidentifying with her peers and the profession led Sun to pursue the profession in such a way that she could remain an architect that was not, as she described it "reactive and habitual".

"So I think that yearning for wholeness was what pushed me in the direction of setting up on my own. . ." she says. Sun had worked for five years with another private practitioner and learned, like everything else in her life defined by contrariness "how not to run a business. . .or. . .how I didn't want to run a business."

She decided not long before the interview that she would move with her children to the country where she could work in harmony with the kinds of environments that influenced her work as an architect and her life philosophies.

Conclusion

The women of these stories are not angry. They are seeking to "create space for themselves, and resist hegemonic discourses, by remaking their conditions of existence *both [sic]* with and against the hegemonic norms through which they are constituted" (Dean 2008:8). "Social identifications are self-descriptions based on a perceived overlap of individual and group identities" (Kreiner and Ashforth 2004). Through the analysis of their discourse in the stories and by comparing the narrative statements to one another in order to identify interpretable meaning from the shared and unshared experiences, we have seen evidence of mechanisms used to actively defend the collective identity of architects while simultaneously denying one's part associated with the collective.

Sun is positive about moving to the country to raise her children. Her chosen lifestyle relates both to her interest in and relation to ecologically sustainable architecture as well as to a desire to

achieve work-life balance. Flo, when asked about her participation in RIAS conferences, says that she has no desire to spend time with architects (or competition), but also admits later in the interview that if she went to the events she would probably enjoy them. Mag, at age 78 is frustrated with not being able to see well enough to continue drawing and has given up her registration with RIAS which is a necessary affiliation for practitioners and is “costly”. She wouldn’t mind having the chance to advise on projects, but without the current registration, she is no longer eligible. Still, she remains in her words, “an architect” and is still working on things “architectural”. She, Flo, and Sun are all a part of and apart from the association with which they identify so strongly.

Women architects, while no longer objects of cognitive antagonistic or counter-identification by their male-counterparts, still negotiate their work space to manage their lives and to participate as fully as possible within the complex world of architects and engineers still dominated by men. It was not apparent that they were adapting gendered traits (Marcella et al 2006) that they might not otherwise have used to strategically negotiate their working life as architects, but the stories, particularly of Mag and Flo remind us that the discourse of the architecture occupation has been a gendered one in their lifetimes and has influenced the ways they have thought about their experiences and the kinds of decisions each woman has made regarding school, family, work, and projects. Sun does not appear to have been influenced directly by the gendered discourse of the two earlier generations, but harsher economic times have revealed the fragility of what has appeared to be a positive trend towards increased gender equality in the profession. With so few women remaining in architecture practice in Scotland, women who are between 30 and 45 and who have begun to take leadership positions are typically among the high percentage of middle managers who are let go during a financial crisis. With even fewer women in leadership roles, there is an increased risk that the male discourse will continue to dominate the workplace and the next generation of women may find themselves struggling as their female predecessors did to assert themselves on the profession’s identity.

The three women architects in this study have challenged gendered constructions through a process of both identifying and disidentifying with the more masculine collective identity of architects thereby securing a place within the profession while remaining somewhat outside. This identification and disidentification with one’s collective professional identity, particularly in gender-biased work domains is an alternative means to manage one’s individual identity and perhaps to negotiate opportunities for leadership roles.

We have argued that current sectoral conditions present particular challenges for mitigating the perpetuation of masculine social constructs, and that the management of identity through facilitating new mechanisms and strategies can lead to increased visibility among women in architecture and other sectors within the creative industries. Such challenges should be addressed in further research. Insights into such tactics and processes may suggest in the future how to manage the apparent inequality in the architectural profession that disables the collective organization in realizing the fuller potential of its individual members, regardless of whether they work as sole-practitioners, start companies temporarily, or join larger design or commercial practices.

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