

The Investigation of Women Civil Engineers' Identity Development through the Lens of Recognition Theory

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Abstract : Engineering identity contributes to the professional and educational persistence of women engineers. A crucial factor contributing to the development of the engineering identity is recognition. Those without adequate recognition often do not succeed in positively building their identities. This research draws on Honneth's recognition theory to identify factors impacting women civil engineers' feelings of recognition as civil engineers. A survey was composed and distributed to 330 female alumni who graduated from the Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering at Iowa State University in the last ten years. The survey items include demographics, perceptions of the identity of civil engineering, and factors that influence the recognition of civil engineering identities, such as views of society and family. Descriptive analysis of the survey responses revealed that the perceptions of civil engineering varied widely. Participants' definitions of civil engineering included the terms: construction, design, and infrastructure. Almost half of the participants reported that the major reason to study civil engineering was their interest in the subject matter, and most reported that they were proud to be civil engineers. Many study participants reported that their parents see them as civil engineers. Treatment of institutions and the workplace were also considered as having a significant impact on the recognition of women civil engineers. Almost half of the participants reported that they felt isolated or ignored at work because of their gender. This research emphasizes the importance of recognition for the development of the civil engineering identity of women

Keywords : civil engineering, gender, identity, recognition

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