GLASS CEILING : A CASE OF DISCRIMINATION OR A CASE FOR DIFFERENTIATION?

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ABSTRACT

Glass ceiling in its universally accepted definition reinforces discriminative perceptions that govern all and related research on gender issues. It is an invisible and an intangible barrier acting as the upper limit for advancement that keeps minorities and women from reaching beyond. Gender concepts have evolved from biological, psychological, social and economic analyses of the issues and their being understood to have been an outcome of each of such analysis. Sex and Gender have equally been researched and identified as components of social conditioning. With such stratified and varied treatment of gender issues, discrimination that is the reason behind the existence of glass ceiling seems to be the outcome of differentiation having gone wrong. Differentiation is a positive economic treatment of unique characteristics. The present paper is an attempt to develop a positive treatment of differentiation through a comprehensive analysis of existing research and how such analysis could remove the glass ceiling through such positive treatment of concepts.

Key words : glass ceiling, sexuality, gender, discrimination, differentiation, invisible barrier.

INTRODUCTION

The glass ceiling phenomenon as mentioned in a Wall Street Journal article in 1986 written by (Hymowitz & Schellhardt,1986) describes it as the lack of upward mobility for women and minorities into executive ranks in corporate jobs.Glass ceiling may now be interpreted in various ways and may have evolved to suit situations but it still can be understood as those "artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing in their organization into upper management positions"(Wright et al., 1995). This implies that glass ceiling is not just discriminatory; it also deprives the organization of the contribution of 'qualified individuals.' Whether the concept is highlighted as the "semi-hard glass ceiling" (Agrawal and Knoeber 2001) or the "ultimate glass ceiling" (Arfken at al. 2004), for women exclusion is felt continually by the 'male brotherhood' as they move up the ladder. This creates a psychological barrier in their upward movement in the hierarchy. According to Vijaywargia, Tripti (2013) Indian Woman working in leading organisation face problems to reach the top due to the presence of glass ceiling. In recent years, however, 'Fortune 500 companies have appointed a good number of women to top jobs. From Meg Whitman at eBay and Sheryl Sandberg at Facebook to Indra Nooyi at Pepsico, and Ginni Rometty at I.B.M., and Mary Barra at General Motors, they are in newspapers, on magazine covers, and on best-seller lists.' (Cassidy, 2014). But this progress seems illusory as gender equality in the workplace has come to mean that 'only superwomen break through the

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glass ceiling.' Cassidy speaks about the holes in the glass ceiling becoming bigger in the past thirty years and that many women have 'clambered' through them. Despite these improvements, though, the ceiling remains intact. Cassidy presents a critique of research based on the American context of the glass ceiling and concludes that while females make up about half the working population, their representation in the top one per cent still lags way behind that of men, and that's even more true for the 0.1 per cent, though 'women like Whitman, Sandberg, Nooyi, Rometty, and Barra aren't alone. Coming up behind them are many more successful women who are already part of the economic élite.'(Cassidy, 2014). While Fortune 500 companies account for only 3 per cent of women CEOs, around 11 per cent of Indian companies have women at the helm, a reason to cheer for India Inc.(India inc's Pride, 2014). 'These inspiring young ladies' are the role models young women in India are looking up to. Though India like most of the rest of the world has a largely patriarchal mindset, we see women holding key business positions and some of the top banking positions as CEOs. It will therefore not be wrong to assume that business paves way for things that suit business. So if having qualified, intelligent business leaders brings success, qualified, intelligent women business leaders do find their way up.

Gender discrimination refers to the practice of granting or denying rights or privileges to a person based on their gender. Workplace discrimination, sexual discrimination, pregnancy discrimination, and wage discrimination are the usual forms of discrimination faced by women but it does not end here. It goes beyond this.

Workplace discrimination can occur in:
- recruiting and selecting staff
- terms, conditions and benefits offered as part of employment
- who receives training and what sort of training is offered
- who is considered and selected for transfer, promotion, retrenchment or dismissal.

It follows therefore that glass ceiling is very closely related to discrimination. The only difference being the tangibility and visibility of discrimination against the transparency and invisibility of glass ceiling. Discrimination in turn is very closely related to hostility and harassment. Unfortunately it is not easy to identify and address discrimination, hostility or harassment unless there are policy frameworks that can distinguish between what is and what is not discrimination. In today's globally competitive marketplace, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool, nor place constraints on what counts as effective behaviours. It is for the organizational leadership to identify, correct and address issues that influence optimization of the talent pool. To ensure that vital leadership talent is effectively assessed and deployed, companies must address stereotypic bias head on (Catalyst, 2007).

Differentiation, which seeks to differentiate and establish uniqueness is something brings in positive discrimination as a useful tool to optimally use uniqueness. Business strategies are competing to sustain in a competitive environment. Gender studies have extensively initiated debates over the differences between the sex and gender and the interchangeable use of the two concepts. Sex is the biological identity of the male and the female whereas gender is a social construct. It is argued that Society makes the differences between boy and girl through gender constructions. The biological differences between the sexes do to some extent explain certain psychological and socially constructed differences. Ruling out discrimination which is the outcome of social variables is not a viable economic alternative where businesses need to run businesses. Certain differences actually find affirmation in the biological sex in so far as they become unique characteristics which are unique and economically viable.

A report by Catalyst examined perceptions of women's and men's leadership among very senior U.S. managers 30 percent of study participants being CEOs. This study that examined women's and men's leadership behaviours showed that managers perceived differences

between women and men that influenced behaviour outcomes. Respondents-both women and men-perceived that women leaders were effective at "caretaker" behaviours such as supporting others and rewarding subordinates whereas men leaders were effective at taking charge by delegating and problem-solving (Catalyst, 2005). This report though not supported by adequate research endorses the Social Cognitive Theory of Gender Development and Differentiation proposed by Kay Bussey and Albert Bandura. Their article addresses the 'psychosocial determinants and mechanisms by which society socializes male and female infants into masculine and feminine adults.' 'Societal gender-typing is the primary basis on which people get differentiated with pervasive effects on their daily lives' and cover aspects like talents imbibed, conception of the self and that of others, the opportunities that come their way along with the constraints they face and finally the 'social life' they lead and the 'occupational path' they choose. Gender differentiation is therefore instrumental in the 'selective' promotion of the attributes and roles in males and females and 'tend to be differentially valued.' (Bussey &Bandura, 1999)

INEQUALITY AS AN OUTCOME OF DIFFERENCE

The whole debate revolving around gender inequality and discriminatory treatment of the so called inferior sex is based on the presumption that the other is superior. The fact that the distinction between sex and gender presumes gender to be a social construct of sex, it offers opportunities to exploit the potential capacity to change the social relations in which we live, so that gender concepts can be developed to suit the social relations between biologically defined men and women (Wright & Rogers, 2011). From an egalitarian point of view, gender relations are fair if, within those relations, males and females have equal power and equal autonomy. This is what could be termed "egalitarian gender relations." This does not imply that all men and all women do exactly the same things, but it does

mean that gender relations generate equal opportunities and choices for men and women. If this egalitarian view be accepted the whole debate over discriminatory treatment would be directed towards role differentiation in a way that would entail different role expectations to optimally use unique characteristics of the male and the female . Many studies have established that men are suited to display one set of characteristics and women to display others. Behavioural gender differences may be viewed in terms of Agentic and Communal qualities (Eagly, 1987). Agentic qualities involve assertiveness, control, and drive or purposefulness and are characterized by aggressiveness, ambition, dominance, independence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and decisiveness. Communal qualities on the other hand represent concern with the welfare of other people. These qualities include ability to devote self to others, caring, affectionate, emotional expressiveness, empathy, helpfulness, and sympathy among others. Empirical evidence indicates that males in general exhibit agentic characterized while females tend to exhibit communal characteristics (Bem, 1974; Rosener, 1990; Ruble, 1983). But cultural institutionalisation of such characteristics cannot be ruled out as centuries of performance through societies in general women have performed reproductive role. Not because of social obligations imposed on them but because of the natural biological process and something as natural as mothering does entail certain characteristics that are more naturally inclined towards nurturing. Research has focussed on identifying reasons other than natural and biological inclination to be a nurturer. And this multidimensional approach towards role performance confuses role identification in all spheres of life.

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity is what a person experiences and identifies with as his role. This is generally described as one's private sense of being a man or a woman.Over the years several major theories have been proposed to explain gender

development. The theories differ on several important dimensions. One dimension concerns the relative emphasis placed on psychological, biological, and socio structural determinants. Psychologically-oriented theories tend to emphasize intra-psychic processes governing gender development (Freud, 1905/1930; Kohlberg, 1966). In contrast, sociological theories focus on sociostructural determinants of gender-role development and functioning (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980;Eagly,1987a; Epstein, 1988). According to biologically-oriented theories, gender differences arising from the differential biological roles played by males and females in reproduction underlie gender-role development and differentiation (Buss, 1985; Trivers, 1972).

Having said this, the positive contribution of research to the understanding of professional inclusion and its progression through centuries of evolution cannot be overlooked or underrated. A biologically deterministic view has problems not only with cultural diversity, but with the rapid pace of social change (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The process of biological evolution happens very slowly but certain social changes that affect social roles happen more rapidly. In the past, a great deal of gender differentiation arose from the biological requirement of women bearing children and caring for them over a good part of their lives. But with changes in role demands in society, family and occupations, the biologically defined inabilities or capabilities are being questioned as well as modified. Societies that have placed economically determined occupational demands on women have facilitated innovations that place fewer demands on women's reproductive activities. There have been marked advancements in women centric initiatives directed at infant mortality, use of contraceptives, maternity assistance and support services for reproductive work that placed unequal demands on women's energy and time. For these and other reasons, educational and occupational pursuits are no longer thwarted by prolonged childbearing demands as they did in the past. Inequitable social constraints and

opportunity structures are being changed by social means rather than by reliance on the slow protracted process of biological selection. Dobzhansky(1972) reminds us that the human species has been selected for learnability and plasticity of behaviour adaptive to diverse habitats and socially constructed environments, not for behavioural fixedness. The pace of social change gives testimony that biology, indeed, permits a range of possibilities. But again, more than social conditioning it is social demand that facilitates such accommodative behaviour. Opportunities as well as threats present in the social fabric enable one to either treat one's characteristics, whether biological or cognitive as being strength or a weakness and depending upon this SWOT analysis of the self individuals develop an identity and perform accordingly. The economic valuation of the outcome of this analysis gives them a professional identity that is rated as economically viable in terms professional acceptance.

Women would much rather be more comfortable with being offered opportunities that give them freedom at the individual level to make choices that support their self chosen role identity. Equality is freedom to choose to do what one wants to do. The reason behind choosing a career simply for an improved self worth has not always been rewarding. The double burden experienced by women in general and Indian women in particular is not a stray incidence but a universal phenomenon. This may well have been an outcome of feminist theories pushing women to testing limits of endurance. This is a vicious circle most women experiencing the double burden find difficult to break free from. Social expectations thwart individual choices which go against the very idea of the fundamental individual freedom. It is not just about being able to fulfil expectations but also about choosing not to fulfil expectations that push you beyond limits. While making a reference to work-life balance in terms of demands placed on working women, Bussey and Bandura(1999) emphasise on the need for research that determines the 'positive spillover' of a satisfying worklife on the family

life of women as against existing research that establishes 'negative spillover' effects of the pressures created by dual roles performed by women on family life. Much of the existing research have found women being stressed at home about their job and at work about their home. "Working mothers are trapped in a cycle of guilt where they feel they are being bad mothers for going to work and bad workers when they put their children first, a study has shown" (Knapton, 2014).

FAMILY THEORIES

There are feminists who have challenged the established traditional role of women as mothers as a natural choice for them, their biological identity not being understood to be their destiny.

Feminist responses to this natural acceptance of destiny as their role identity have been discussed in "Feminist Perspectives on Reproduction and the Family", by Satz Debra (2013). She argues that families are social institutions being governed by laws and are therefore not immune to political intervention by state. This is also because of State's interest in their development as future citizens. This intervention therefore requires removal of barriers for women's opportunities and freedom. In this understanding of the traditional role, Debra further discusses the three feminist perspectives.

Social constructivists are feminists who question differences between 'male and female bodies or psychologies' that form the basis of women's role in the family They feel that the differences are essentially the outcome of inequality being observed by culture, religion and society.

Difference feminists do accept that there are essential biological or psychological differences between men and women, but they challenge the normative and social implications of these differences. The valuation of the outcome of these differences determines the status of women. If nurturing were a more valued activity, for example, then we might arrange the work world so that women (and men) could spend more time with their children. Or, we might pay women (and men) for their household labor and work in raising children. Difference feminists seek to celebrate and revalue those characteristics traditionally associated with women. Difference feminists do not find any problem with a sex-based division of labour as long as it is by choice and male and female roles are 'appropriately valued'.

The anti-subordination feminists reject the idea of biological and psychological difference between men and women. They believe that acceptance of natural differences between men and women, do not justify social structures that expose women to vulnerabilities like poverty, unequal pay for equal work, and domestic violence. The differences do not call for unequal treatment. Biology did not require assigning of a wife's property and rights wholly to her husband, discriminatory divorce laws, child custody laws, or laws governing women's reproduction. Nothing in our nature dictates the structure of work and school hours that make it extremely difficult for women to combine work and raising children. Nature therefore does not justify the extent of the social inequality between men and women.

Difference feminists have therefore propounded a less trying role for women by addressing the practical implication of women bearing the burden of proof. Differentiation would then facilitate specialisation that would increase the bargaining capacity of women in their professional roles and would thus address inclusion in a positive

If discrimination be understood as practice of granting or denying rights or privileges to a person based on their gender, as long as it restricts its focus to granting or denying rights, it could well be seen as less threatening to the gender identity of either of the sexes. But the moment the focus shifts to granting or denying privileges, it generates hostility towards the between the two, whether it is grant or denial of privilege. Therefore, if HR policies or legal framework fulfil the economic demands of an inclusive structure, they may not necessarily prove non discriminatory for individual perception of those

who are granted or denied a privilege. Human stress is widely viewed as the emotional strain that arises when perceived task demands exceed perceived capability to manage them (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

INCLUSION OF DIFFERENCES

Policies and legal frameworks go a long way in bringing about equality. Much has been done world over by way of progressive initiatives that consciously work towards bringing out women from their traditional psychological and even biological perception of the productive as well as the reproductive roles they perform. Men and women come face to face with their prejudices about what or who they are based on their preconceptions of gender roles. 'In business, gender-based preconceptions create other fantasies of a man or a woman that can form obstacles in productive working relationships' (Senman, 2014). Both perceived male and female characteristics may exist in an individual. But those that are perceivably feminine like receptiveness and care-giving are the ones that are being suppressed because of the value that is attached to male characteristics of aggression and action. An integration of both characteristics in leadership roles can create a more balanced business environment.

But the lack of recognition for the importance of such integration of characteristics in leaders explains the existence of the Glass Ceiling. Despite the progress that has been made in promoting gender equality in the workplace, it sometimes seems like only superwomen break through the glass ceiling. John Cassidy in his identification of the "Hole in the Glass Ceiling" becoming "bigger" says "We know that we aren't approaching gender equality, or anything like it.

As long as differentiation leads to discrimination and women are understood to be best suited for back-end/administrative or teaching jobs, the proverbial glass ceiling will remain an invisible yet tangible reality. Women who aim at breaking it will have to wage a bigger war to maintain a healthy work-life balance or at times, making tough choices between family and

work. This tough choice between family and work is evident in only a few reaching the top echelons. Whether it is by compulsion or by choice is yet a matter to be further researched. One would say that why wouldn't anyone choose to reach the higher echelons. The contention that one may not would have to be substantiated by a study on job satisfaction on those who do and those who don't.

ROLE IDENTIFICATION AND MARKET DEMAND

The timesjobs.com analysis of top job profiles gives a clearer picture of how economic or market demand brings in more of inclusion than policies and frameworks. From core to support functions, women candidates are ruling the demand charts. The most in-demand function for women candidates includes HR/PM/IR/ Training/T&D, Front Office/Administration, Accounting & Finance, BFSI and Marketing & Advertising. Indian employers still don't prefer women employees for labour intensive/field jobs such as Sales/Business Development and Engineering.

The demand for women employees is highest in the 2-5 years experience category followed by less than 2 years category. What comes as a surprise is that Indian employers are not looking for women candidates at senior positions, especially in the over 20 years experience level.

Despite the high demand in core functions such as Banks/Insurance/Financial Services, Accounting & Finance and IT/Telecom and Engineering, female workforce is still opting for support functions. The most preferred functions by women candidates are HR/PM/IR/Training/ T&D and Teaching/Education, where their supply is over 40 per cent, shows the TimesJobs.com data. Engineering and Sales/Business Development functions are least preferred by women employees.

According to Dr. Hema Krishnan, the first woman to be employed in Sales division of HPCL, India, and currently a Professor of Strategic Management in Xavier University, "the forces (socio-cultural, legal, personal, and

organizational) that affect a woman's rise to the upper echelons of an institution are for the most part, universal. Theoretically, every woman is capable of reaching the top of her organization. What sets women such as Indra Nooyi and Chanda Kochchar apart from the rest of the similarly talented women are: a high level of sustained self-confidence and emotional quotient, persistence and patience, the right mentors at various stages of their career, an extremely supportive family and a little bit of luck or opportunity." (Krishnan, 2015)

This explains why only a few reach the top. The socio-cultural, legal, personal and organizational forces that affect the upward movement are universal but it is the presence of variables like high level of sustained self-confidence (a function of a progressive social environment), emotional quotient (a function of sustained self-confidence), persistence and patience(a function of emotional quotient), right mentor, supportive family; that actually are conditions precedent to such rise. So is the glass-ceiling experienced by the majority who do not possess the conditions precedent to rise above is again something not proved. Glass ceiling can be felt only when one reaches the ceiling beyond which the supportive forces are in any case universal, equally applicable to men or women seeking upward movement. Lindsay Broder in her article, "Enough about the glass ceiling" says, "There's nothing wrong with talking about barriers for growth for women in the workplace, but much of the conversation today paints the proverbial glass ceiling as if it's something women have no control over." Broder is of the view that women do have control over the proverbial glass ceiling. She identifies certain choices women have made on their own that explains discrimination as it is seen in the form of glass ceiling and denial of equal pay for equal work 50 years after Equal Pay Act was signed into law. Promotion through fulfilment of a mandatory quota does add to the number of women in employment but acquiring strategic positions is something one needs to work towards. Perception is reality, and because we waste a lot of energy believing and put up with the idea that there is this metaphoric barrier in our way, it's killing our confidence. Everyone faces obstacles in their careers - even men.

GLASS CEILING: A MYTH OR REALITY

Sometimes the greatest barriers we face are the ones we create for ourselves. Anuja Yadav in her article Glass Ceiling-Myth or Reality speaks of such self created barriers

The first barrier according to Yadav is the doubt one has about one's capability to scale heights. This is the glass ceiling of our minds.

The next barrier we face is the belief that an ambitious young individual cannot balance work and family life. Of particular importance is the issue of gender. Women have long been seen in the traditional role of the homemaker who takes care of the children. But with the growing need for roles to converge, we see more and more dads taking up housework and child care. Single men and women need to take care of their work life balance as well. Many corporate houses are recognizing this trend and providing initiatives to cope with work-life balance. However, female employees who maintain high work-family conflict are considered not appropriate for promotions.

The third barrier is the society. When women moved out of their traditional roles, a second wave of feminism in the form of super womanhood (a term coined by Betty Friedan) took shape. There's a common belief that women excel in gender specific roles. The leadership styles to management decisions of women are seen as distinct from those of men. This should be seen as an advantage to businesses that require different leadership styles in different business situations.

Studies across the globe have shown progressive trends but as they say "it is lonely at the top". From a corporate perspective, women still face gender pay gap. We still encounter gender stereotypes. There's a common belief that men worldwide desire top jobs more often than women. Even if the glass ceiling does exist, it does not impact job satisfaction. When Lindsay Broder questions women who she thinks are to

blame for the glass ceiling, she says, "women who complain about inequality in the workplace are often the same women who want flexible work schedules or other benefits so that they can have it all. For many, having it all means deciding that you want to have a career and raise a family - and that's ok. You can have it all. However, you can't expect to be the CEO of a large multinational corporation if you don't put in the time to get there. According to a recent survey of 4,000 employees at big companies, 36 percent of men said they want to be CEO, whereas only 18 percent of woman said the same.(Broder, 2013)

Women gain social acceptance as doctors and in positions of leadership in traditionally woman-dominated fields like education. This would mean that glass ceiling is sector-centric. Hema Krishnan feels that there is some truth to this notion. Women are seen in the C-suites of certain industries such as publishing, education, entertainment, healthcare, etc. They, however have negligible representation in defence and aerospace, banking, and engineering especially in the Western economies. In India, women are entering professions that were once dominated by men. In sectors such as advertising, banking, engineering, civil services, manufacturing, and the civil services, there is an exponential growth in the number of women. One major reason for this development could be the change that has occurred at the grassroots level. Glass Ceiling in developed and developing countries differ in as much as they do not provide equal opportunities to women at the grassroots level. In emerging and developing countries, religious, legal, and economic factors are particularly discriminatory towards women and these impacts opportunities at the entry level. For the women who do have these opportunities and who are able to have a career, in emerging countries such as China or India, the glass ceiling they confront is no different from that confronted by women in the western world.(Krishnan, 2015)

Sheryl Sandberg, COO, Facebook, has presented deeply troubling statistics about women:

1. Women are 57% of college graduates and 63% of masters degree holders, but that majority fades as careers progress.
2. 21 of the Fortune 500 CEOS are women.
3. Women hold 14% of executive officer positions.
4. Women hold 16% of board seats
5. Congress is 18% female.
6. In 1970, Women were paid $0.59 for every dollar men made. It's now $0.77.
   So what is going on?
1. Women have to prove themselves more than men. A McKinsey study says men are promoted based on potential, while women are promoted on accomplishments.
2. But maybe women are holding themselves back
3. In a survey of 4,000 employees at big companies, 36% of men said they want to be CEO. Only 18% of women said the same
4. More male college students say they want to "reach managerial level" three years after school than females.
5. Women are less likely to say they want to be President
6. Middle school boys say they want to be leaders when they grow up, middle school girls don't usually say that
7. Successful women are more likely to feel like "imposters" who will be found out
8. Despite outperforming men, female surgical students give themselves lower grades
9. Girls perform worse on tests when they have to check off M or F before taking it.
10. Men attribute their success to innate qualities and skills. Women attribute their success to luck and help from others.
11. When men fail they say it's because they weren't interested. Women blame their lack of ability
12. Men are 60% more likely to think of themselves as "very qualified" to run for office.
    So why do women seem to aspire less and be less confident?
1. Parents talk to girl babies more than boy babies
2. Mothers overestimate their son's ability to

crawl and underestimate their daughters
3. Mothers spend more time comforting and hugging infant girls
4. Mothers are more likely to just watch their infant boys play by themselves.
5. Teachers call on boys more often
6. Teachers answer boys when they call out and scold girls when they do and tell them to raise their hands.
7. One reason limiting the ambition of women is that they are primary bread winner
8. 41% of women are primary breadwinners. 23% are co-breadwinners. 52% of black kids are raised by a single mother.

Fortunately the solution to much of this is pretty simple:

Sharing financial and childcare responsibilities with a husband makes for less guilty moms, more involved dads, and "thriving" children."

Sheryl Sandberg is the COO of Facebook and she feels that a lot in her life has happened because she and her husband have worked out a fifty- fifty work-family-success schedule. She says more that laying focus on career growth women should focus on getting the right partner. We don't make it any easier for men when we speak of gender mainstreaming through legislation and affirmative action.

When John Cassidy identified the hole in the glass ceiling that was getting bigger he questions the reason behind these trends. Part of the answer he says, is that women who reach the top levels of income distribution now tend to stay there. Thirty years ago, that wasn't true. There was a tendency for women who did very well one year to fall off the next-a phenomenon that some authors refer to as "the paper floor." "The persistence of top-earning females has dramatically increased in the last thirty years, so today the paper floor has been largely mended," they say. "Whereas female top earners were once about twice as likely as men to drop out of the top earnings groups, today they are no more likely than men to do so." The impact of this change has been substantial. According to Guvenen, Kaplan, and Song, it accounts for more than half of the increase in the proportion of females in the top one per cent. So the fact remains that the movement of more women is less likely the reason behind the presence of more women in the top one percent that is the women already there choosing to stay there. Is this because successful women don't drop out of the workforce to raise families as often as they once did? The paper doesn't really answer this question. However, it does show that the impact of domestic life hasn't gone away. Among the top one per cent, the gender gap between men and women increases for those in their thirties, "presumably when some females' careers are interrupted for family reasons," and then declines among older cohorts.

It is best left to social and family dynamics to take care of issues like equality, mainstreaming, work-life balance, nurturing social and family structures and being counted in the economy through all such roles the two, men and women perform. it automatically reflects on what is sought by socio-economic structures and happens only through what suits best to individuals.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER RELATIONS

What follows below is a brief descriptive tour through some of the major changes in patterns of gender inequality during the last decades of the twentieth century. The simple story is that there have been tremendous gains in the direction of greater equality, though significant inequalities remain. All of this has happened because society has identified suitable roles that can be performed by men and women to suit the socio-economic requirement of a developing society. The legal framework and the business environment reflects this organic growth.

1. *Legal Rights:* It is hard for most people alive today to really understand how it could be that before 1920 women in the United States did not have the right to vote. This was justified on many grounds: they were not as rational or intelligent as men; they were not really autonomous and would have their votes controlled by the men in their lives; like children, they were ruled by their emotions. The result is that women were not really full political citizens until the third decade of the 20th century. Aside from a few isolated contexts in which women are

barred from certain activities - for example, direct combat roles in the military - women now do, effectively, have equal formal rights to men.

2. *Labour force participation:* Continuous labour force participation with brief interruptions with the birth of a child, has become the new cultural norm. This is an extraordinarily rapid change in the relationship between women and the labour market, more rapid, for example, than the change in employment patterns that occurred during the industrial revolution.

3. *Occupational Structure and earnings:* The dramatic increase in female labour force participation has been accompanied by a significant change in the economic opportunities of women both in terms of the occupations women fill and the earnings they receive

4. *Power:* Gender inequality in the extent to which women occupy positions which confer significant power is more difficult to assess than inequality in pay or in occupational distributions. One indicator is presence of women on boards of directors and top managerial positions in large corporations.

5. *Transformation in family structure:* The period since the end of the WWII has also witnessed a dramatic and rapid change in the nature of family structure and the composition of households. In the last half of the twentieth century in a variety of ways, marriage has become a less central and stable institution in many people's lives.

6. *Domestic division of labour within the family:* The family is one of the pivotal sites where gender relations are produced and reproduced. It is a central place where children first learn about the roles connected to gender, and where power relations built around gender are located. "Patriarchy" as a historically central form of gender relations means literally "rule by the father" and was firmly based in male domination inside of families. The initial affect of increased labour force participation of wives and mothers may have been messier houses! but then, men did gradually begin to do more. This is entirely because mothers on average decreased the amount of time they spent cleaning house. This is still far from an equal sharing of housework, but it reflects some real movement

in that direction. Full-time working mothers still do a second shift at home, and they have less free time than their husbands, but the disparity has begun to decline.

7. *Sexuality:* Sexuality has an extremely complex relation to gender relations in general and gender inequality in particular. Some scholars have argued that one of the central motives historically for male domination cantered on the problem of female fertility: the only way that men could guarantee that they were in fact the fathers oftheir children was to control the bodies of the women who were to be mothers of those children. Controlling female sexuality and fertility was therefore a central component of the social processes that generate male domination. The continuing controversies in American society over the availability of certain forms of contraception and, above all, abortion, reflect this age-old issue of the social processes through which biological reproduction are controlled. There have been striking changes in the social acceptance of women having control over their bodies. these changes are indeed striking. They constitute very substantial gains in individual autonomy and self-determination, and are also intimately connected to the transformation of gender relations in an egalitarian direction.

CONCLUSION

The simple answer to the question of existing barriers and the gradual removal of the same focuses on the ways the massive changes in the economy can open up new opportunities in the paid labour force for women, and how, as women take advantages of these opportunities this could undermine certain traditional patterns of gender relations. These processes in turn will open a space for collective action by women's groups to challenge the rules of the game that discriminate against women and create barriers to their advancement, and the success of those challenges, in turn will accelerate the movement into the labour force and the erosion of some aspects of traditional gender relations.

Inequalities of power and privilege do not continue out of sheer momentum; they require considerable social energy and resources to be reproduced. If, over time, the interests of

powerful people become less tied to a particular form of oppression, they are likely to devote less energy and fewer resources to sustain that inequality, and this makes the oppression in question more vulnerable to challenge. In the case of gender inequality, the interests of men in general, and elite, powerful men in particular, in maintaining certain aspects of male domination and gender inequality weakened over time. This doesn't mean that men ceased to be sexist. They have all sorts of attitudes and beliefs which impeded - and continue to impede - gender inequality. The key idea here is that many men also had interests which weakened their stake in male domination. A good example of this is the economic interests of employers in capitalist firms, particularly once their need for highly educated, literate labour increases. This seems to be happening even while the society glorifies differentiation. Glass ceiling is a phenomenon felt by a few, whether it be considered a myth or a reality. Once more women start filling the middle levels not because of revolutionary ideals but because it suits the socio-economic structure of a developing society, it is sure to disappear. It's only a matter of time when we shall witness this disappearance without seeking to shatter it.

The authors are grateful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their suggestions to improve the overall quality of the paper. Usual disclaimers are applicable.

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