

ness priority is endorsed and propagated by the leadership team. Take ANZ, for example. The ANZ Diversity Council is a decision-making forum of senior executive members across the Group, working together to build a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture to contribute to high business performance. It is chaired by none other than the CEO, Mike Smith!

We all need common diversity goals to work for irrespective of whether we are the Head of Human Resources or the business unit. I have also learnt that at the beginning, we may not have all the answers and so would need to permit evolution of the diversity story and at times redefine our diversity priorities.

Social Factors affecting Gender Inclusivity

A top performer in one of the previous companies I worked for, quit the organization because her mother-in-law wanted her to be a “good housewife who took care of the husband and children.” No amount of cajoling and reasoning worked with her mother-in-law and we lost a great performer.

Working women still continue to have the primary responsibility of taking care of the children and household needs. They are expected to sacrifice career progression for their family life and also have to deal with the glass ceiling that prevents them from moving upwards in the organization. The good news is that we

One of the important aspects of effectively managing gender diversity at the workplace is to have complete support of the top management. To have a gender inclusive work environment, it is important that this business priority is endorsed and propagated by the leadership team.

have seen many organizations, governments, and individuals break these norms and barriers and help the women in their career path.

Make Uniqueness a Blessing

One individual who has made a lasting impression on me is Ms. Muthamma. She is known for her successful crusade for equality of women in the male-dominated Indian Civil Services of her time. She filed a petition against the Government of India on the ground that she had been overlooked for promotion, arguing that the rules governing the employment of women in the service were discriminatory. Her case was upheld in 1979 in a landmark judg-

ment by a three-member Bench, headed by Justice V R Krishna Iyer. The court impressed upon the Government of India “the need to overhaul all service rules to remove the stains of sex discrimination, without waiting for *ad hoc* inspiration from writ petitions or gender charity.”

While these are just a few thoughts and reflections based on my experience, we need to continue on our travails of increasing diversity at the workplace. A good beginning point will be to ponder on the thoughts of the philosopher, Barbara Marx Hubbard, who felt that an enlightened society ought to ask each group or culture to contribute what it considers its unique gift. She said, “Make uniqueness a blessing.” Isn’t that what gender diversity is all about? 🌸

A Multi-level Model of Workplace Gender Experience

Vipin Gupta

Ros Jaffe Chair Professor of Strategy
Simmons School of Management, Boston
e-mail: gupta05@gmail.com

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how workplace influences the gender experience of men and women, and to examine the role of gender and institutions, of organizational and societal cultures, and of organizational and national leadership.

The paper starts by identifying a single level model of workplace experience, as given in Figure 1, showing the roles of gender and institutions. Then, a multi-level model is constructed, including the role of organizational and societal cultures (Figure 2). Finally, the implications

Figure 1: A Single-level Model of Workplace Gender Experience

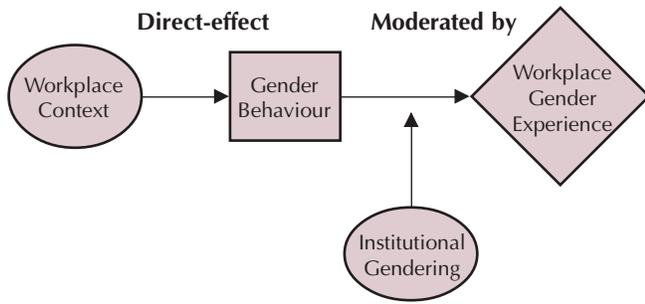
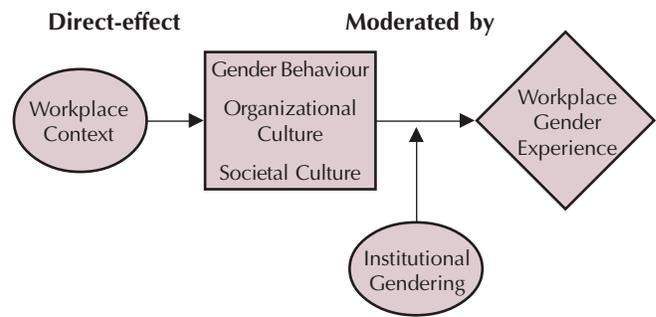


Figure 2: A Multi-level Model of Workplace Gender Experience



for organizational and national leadership are noted, and future directions are suggested.

Direct Role of Gender

First, in different workplace contexts, men and women tend to enact different sort of behaviours (Osland *et al*, 1998). For instance, in some contexts, women may find themselves “doing gender” and be less assertive than men, and in others, they may have to try “negating gender” and be as assertive as men. This doing or negating gender has a direct influence on workplace gender experience – assertive women may be seen as too pushy, while non-assertive women may be seen as too soft (Valian, 1998).

Moderating Role of Institutions

Second, different workplaces have different degrees of institutional gendering – i.e., the degree to which “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control,

action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine.” (Acker, 1990: 146) The institutional gendering tends to be low, for instance, when the institutions have greater exposure to women in leadership roles.

Institutional Gendering and Workplace Experience

The degree of institutional gendering moderates how men and women experience the effects of their gender behaviours in the workplace (See Table 1).

When institutional gendering is low, women doing gender tend to have positive workplace experience, where perceptions of female leader effectiveness are strong and stereotypes about gender roles are weak (Beaman, *et al*, 2009). Moreover, ne-

gating gender while being emotionally challenging, does

In some contexts, women may find themselves “doing gender” and be less assertive than men, and in others, they may have to try “negating gender” and be as assertive as men. This doing or negating gender has a direct influence on workplace gender experience – assertive women may be seen as being too pushy, while non-assertive women may be seen as too soft.

Table 1: Propositions on How Institutional Gendering Moderates Gender Behaviour

Institutional Gendering	Gender Behaviour	Workplace Experience	Consequence
Low	Doing gender	Positive	Men and women can behave naturally and be happy.
Low	Negating gender	Neutral	Men and women may negate gender, if they are happier that way.
High	Doing gender	Negative	Men and women enjoy different advantages for doing gender, so women need to decide what they value more – doing gender or negating it.
High	Negating gender	Double negative	Women must strive not only to negate gender, but also learn to ignore and live with the negativity of their masculine stereotyping.

not offer any advantage. Therefore, women experience no pressures for negating gender, and for behaving like men.

Conversely, when institutional gendering is high, doing gender produces negative experiences for women, e.g., being offered less challenging assignments and perceived as too emotional for the leadership role. In such cases, women experience pressure for negating gender and behaving like men, and then find that their enactment of masculine behaviours is seen differently (and even more negatively) than men doing masculine behaviours – contributing to what is referred to as “double binds” (Ely and Rhode, 2010). Thus, my interviews of women leaders in Central and Eastern Europe suggest that women behaving like men are perceived as being bitches, bad mothers, and untrustworthy.

A Multi-level Model: Adding Organizational and Societal Cultures

A single level model puts the burden of the workplace experience outcome on how men and women behave. It is their choice of doing or negating gender that has positive, neutral, negative, or double negative workplace experience for women.

However, it is constraining to focus on only gender behaviours as the factor anchoring workplace experience for men and women. Irrespective of gender behaviours, organizational and societal cultures also have a critical influence on workplace gender experience. Moreover, institutional gendering also moderates these work cultures.

Organizational and societal cultures have several elements. Performance orientation or meritocracy is one salient dimension of organizational culture. Meritocracy implies that same set of opportunities are offered to both men and women, based on the same set of performance evaluation criteria. When institutional gendering is high, the organizations tend to socially construct a façade of “neutral meritocracy” (Hatchet, 2003), where the performance evaluation criteria conform to the male norms such as working long hours and being assertive (Korvajärvi, 1998). Men consequently get more oppor-

tunities, greater compensation, and more positions of power and leadership (Kelan, 2009).

Similarly, gender egalitarianism is an important dimension of societal culture. GLOBE research suggests that the US, for instance, is more gender egalitarian than India (House et al, 2004), though both are gender non egalitarian in absolute sense. While there is lower disparity between men and women in the US than in India, yet in both societies, the opportunities for women are more constrained than for men.

When institutional gendering is high, a societal culture of low gender egalitarianism would yield even fewer opportunities for women – the female advantages are minimized, and the female disadvantages are amplified.

Leadership for Institutional and Cultural Change

To ensure positive workplace gender experience, it is imperative for the leaders to strive for positive institutional and cultural change.

In the single level model, one obvious solution is to de-gender the institutions, so that the women are not disadvantaged. However, institutional gendering tends to be invisible, and the voices that suggest that institutions are gendered often get suppressed for a variety of reasons (Kelan, 2009). For instance, if the leaders acknowledge that the organizational institutions are gendered, then they may subject the organization to

discrimination lawsuits and deter women from joining or continuing with the organization.

Another possible solution is to train women to negate gender through mentoring and role modeling, and to train men and women not to negatively stereotype women who negate gender. Many organizations pursue this solution, and research suggests that it is common for successful women to enact masculine behaviours and for some organizations to make it politically incorrect to negatively stereotype such women. The latter can gradually help to de-gender the institutions, and mitigate the need for training women to negate gender to be successful.

When institutional gendering is low, women doing gender tend to have positive workplace experience, where perceptions of female leader effectiveness are strong and stereotypes about gender roles are weak.

The multi-level model can offer additional promising solutions. The leaders may pursue opportunities for changing organizational culture. For instance, when a meritocracy performance orientation culture is impeding the ability of the organization to benefit from the female advantages, then it would be worthwhile to complement meritocracy with focused initiatives for recruiting, flexing, networking, mentoring, and advancing women in domains and positions where they receive low performance evaluations (Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland, 2007).

The leaders may also pursue opportunities for changing societal culture. For instance, when a low gender egalitarian culture constrains the pool of qualified – technically as well as mentally – women in the workplace, they should strive to make interventions that help qualify more women. For instance, they may work with the academic institutions to ensure that women get appropriate educational access, and are not constrained, as families constrained for finances choose to support their sons, instead of daughters. If the organizational leaders do not intervene,

It is common for successful women to enact masculine behaviours and for some organizations to make it politically incorrect to negatively stereotype such women. The latter can gradually help to de-gender the institutions, and mitigate the need for training women to negate gender to be successful.

then the national leaders may have to step in – for instance, in Nordic European nations, legislative force has made it obligatory for the organizations to have a representative proportion of women in their boards (Sarfati, 2008).

Future Directions

A fruitful future direction for research would be to explore another possible solution – i.e., changing the features of the workplace context. For instance, if one compares urban *vs.* rural contexts in India, gender experience is often more positive in the rural than in the urban contexts. Thus, micro finance/micro entrepreneurship initiatives in the rural areas have involved predominantly women.

This suggests possible opportunities for identifying the features of the rural workplace that are sensitive to the values of women, and to incorporate them within the urban context. Similarly, by identifying the features of the urban workplace that are sensitive to the values of men, and fusing them with the rural context, both types of gender equity could be realized in either of the contexts. ♡

References

- Acker, J (1990). "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations," *Gender and Society*, 4(2), 139-158.
- Beaman, L; Chattopadhyay, R; Duflo, E; Pande, R; Topalova, P (2009). "Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(4), 1497-1540.
- Ely, R and Rhode D (2010). "Women and Leadership: Defining the Challenges," In Nohria, N and Khurana, R (Eds.), *Advancing Leadership*, Boston: HBS Publishing.
- Hatcher, C (2003). "Refashioning a Passionate Manager: Gender at Work," *Gender, Work and Organization*, 10(4), 391-412.
- House, R J; Hanges, P J; Javidan, M; Dorfman, M and Gupta, V (Eds.) (2004). *Culture, Organization, and Leadership: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kelan, E K (2009). "Gender Fatigue: The Ideological Dilemma of Gender Neutrality and Discrimination in Organizations," *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 26(3), 197-210.
- Korvajärvi, P (1998). "Reproducing Gendered Hierarchies in Everyday Work: Contradictions in an Employment Office," *Gender, Work and Organization*, 5(1), 19-30.
- Osland, JS; Synder, M M and Hunter, L (1998). "A Comparative Study of Managerial Styles among Female Executives in Nicaragua and Costa Rica," *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 28(2), 54-73.
- Sarfati, H (2008). "Gender Equality and Welfare Politics in Scandinavia: The Limits of Political Ambition?" *International Labour Review*, 147(2/3), 287-291.
- Wittenberg-Cox, A and Maitland, A (2007). *Why Women Mean Business: Understanding the Emergence of our Next Economic Revolution*. NY: Wiley & Sons.