Women in Leadership: Understanding the gender gap

June 2013

committee for economic development of australia

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Understanding the gender gap

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About this publication
Women in Leadership: Understanding the gender gap

ISBN: 0 85801 287 1

Design: Robyn Zwar Graphic Design

Photography:
Chapter 1: CEDA Photo Library, Gail Kelly, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, The Westpac Group at the CEDA Economic and Political Overview, Sydney, 17 February 2011.
Chapter 5: CEDA Photo Library, person using Ipad, CEDA Women in Leadership event, Brisbane, 13 November, 2012.
Chapter 6: CEDA Photo Library, CEDA Board Director, Dr Sally Pitkin, Women in Leadership event, Brisbane, 2 May, 2013.
Chapter 8: Prime Minister Julia Gillard arrives at the National Press Club in Canberra, Wednesday, January 30, 2013. AAP Image/Alan Porritt.
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About CEDA
CEDA – the Committee for Economic Development of Australia – is a national, independent, member-based organisation providing thought leadership and policy perspectives on the economic and social issues affecting Australia.

We achieve this through a rigorous and evidence-based research agenda, and forums and events that deliver lively debate and critical perspectives.

CEDA's expanding membership includes more than 800 of Australia's leading businesses and organisations, and leaders from a wide cross-section of industries and academia. It allows us to reach major decision makers across the private and public sectors.

CEDA is an independent not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1960 by leading Australian economist Sir Douglas Copland. Our funding comes from membership fees, events and sponsorship.

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Foreword

Over the last three years CEDA has been at the forefront of thought leadership on gender equality in the workplace through its Australia-wide Women in Leadership series. This research draws on those extensive discussions, along with contributions from experts in the field and a survey of the business community.

This publication examines why women continue to be under-represented in leadership positions and paid less than their male colleagues in the Australian workforce, looking at the full spectrum of issues from unconscious bias to tax arrangements and childcare.

It also looks at what has worked elsewhere, from onsite childcare to tackling the portrayal of women in the media such as the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media in the US.

CEDA has pursued this issue because not only is equality vital to having a progressive, just and fair society, but it also makes economic sense. Many studies have proven the benefits of a diverse workforce. This, coupled with the fact that more than 50 per cent of university graduates are female, means women, more than ever, will be vital in meeting our future skills and labour demand and improving productivity.

And make no mistake gender inequality in the workplace is still a significant issue in Australia.

The results of the CEDA survey of more than 600 people in the Australian business community accompanying this research found that over half the respondents, predominantly female, had been discriminated against on the basis of gender.

Progress unfortunately has been slow but it is an issue that must be resolved and one CEDA will continue to tackle. This research is one step in helping progress this and I hope you find it an insightful and valuable resource.

I would like to thank the CEDA Advisory Group that oversaw the development of this project and the eight contributing authors who have helped us put together this comprehensive publication.

Finally I would like to thank CEDA members CSL, Ernst & Young and Medibank for supporting this research. Without their support important work such as this would not be possible.

Professor the Hon. Stephen Martin
Chief Executive
CEDA

A note from our sponsors

CSL

Workforce diversity is essential to the growth and long-term success of every business. CSL aims to ensure our 11,000-strong workforce reflects the diversity of the communities in which we operate, and we have a long-demonstrated culture of inclusiveness. Women currently represent 54 per cent of our Australian workforce and bring enormous value to the business.

CSL's sponsorship of this important report reflects our commitment to continually seeking ways to improve our support of both women, and men, in achieving the fine balance between a career and family.

Ernst & Young

Ernst & Young is pleased to support CEDA's Women in Leadership program. It's through programs like this we can highlight the imperative of gender equity in business.

2012 marked the 10th year of the Australian Census of Women in Leadership – a decade of measuring whether our listed companies include women in their board, executive and management teams. Women still hold less than 10 per cent of executive positions in the ASX 200, and only six per cent of line management positions - statistics that need to be addressed.

Through our own Women in Leadership campaign, Ernst & Young continues to explore the issues around gender equity in the workplace. We believe it's important for the business community to advocate real and sustainable change.

Medibank

As Australia's largest provider of health insurance and health services, and also employer to over 4500 individuals nationwide, Medibank is proud to have sponsored this publication and CEDA's Victorian Women in Leadership series 2012. The series was a great opportunity to highlight the barriers facing women but also to showcase good practice. The events were interesting and enlightening; we heard from fantastic speakers and participated in robust discussions. Most importantly, the events highlighted the value of diversity in the workplace and the need to support women while addressing the gender gap. This report encompasses all these findings, making it an important and essential document. We've come a long way in the past 50 years, but there is still some way to go as we progress towards a workforce that is diverse, supportive and all encompassing.

Executive summary

Introduction

Over the past 50 years, Australia has made major legal and societal leaps regarding women's rights which have led to significant improvements in female workforce participation and pay equity.

Despite these achievements, women continue to lag behind men when it comes to participation and earnings in the workforce and in senior roles (the gender gap). In fact, the pay differential exists even among graduates for whom the usual explanations for salary disparity (e.g. amount of experience) do not typically exist. The persistence of the gender gap is costing Australia billions of dollars in foregone economic growth each year.

Gender diversity policies are becoming more common, driven by corporate governance reporting requirements and organisations' cognisance of the benefits of diversity, such as a more inclusive workplace, higher retention rates and improved employee engagement.

As organisations continue to set diversity strategies, it is crucial to understand why the gap still exists. Identifying and understanding the gender gap will go a long way in assisting business and government to formulate optimal policies to address the gender gap, and to capitalise on the opportunities of a more diverse

workplace and talent pool. Gender diversity policies can also pave the way for broader diversity policies.

This policy perspective investigates the reasons behind the persistence of the gender gap. It finds that numerous barriers to equality of opportunity still exist and puts forward recommendations to address them.

These recommendations are crucial if Australia is to maximise women's contribution to the economy and support the long-term prosperity of the nation.

Gender equality barriers

The growing focus on measurable gender diversity policies has renewed interest in the merits of targets and quotas, particularly for senior women. However, policies that focus on achieving statistical and specific outcomes do not necessarily address the underlying issue – barriers to equality of opportunity. In a recent CEDA survey of the business community, 93.2 per cent of respondents said they believe there are barriers to women's equality in the workplace, while 51.1 per cent (primarily women) said they have been discriminated against on the basis of gender.

Contributors to this policy perspective identified unconscious bias and backlash as barriers to equality of opportunity. These barriers prevent meritocratic systems from working efficiently. For women in leadership positions, insufficient career development, promotion pathways and mentoring provision, childcare cost and availability were identified as barriers, rather than lack of competence or interest.

Contributors also found that corporate culture conventions, such as the association of leadership with male paradigms and the inflexible nine-to-five work schedule are barriers to gender equality. Societal forces, such as hard-wired gender roles and societal expectations, are also impediments. These include the belief that women do not want a career and the disproportionately high burden of caring work that falls on women, even when they are employed in full-time work.

These findings echo those of respondents to the CEDA survey who ranked workplace culture, lack of female leaders and gender stereotypes as the most significant barriers, while they also identified the 'boys' club', lack of support among women, unconscious bias and lack of confidence as important barriers.

The following recommendations are based on these findings.

Recommendations

Enabling workplace meritocracies

The assumption that workplaces are meritocracies does not always hold, leaving women on an uneven playing field. Organisations may help ensure that workplaces become meritocracies by:

- Raising awareness regarding all areas of unconscious bias and addressing them through unconscious bias programs, including educating employees about gender diversity and the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes;
- Performing structured pay audits to identify potential gender pay gaps;
- Examining recruitment processes and selection criteria, as well as indicators used to assess performance and promotion to ensure that they are not unconsciously and unwittingly biased against women; and
- Offering mentoring programs and networking opportunities to support women's careers and equip them for leadership roles with a view to level the playing field.

Changing workplace culture

Societal norms, such as traditional gender roles, can affect women's equality in the workplace. Business and government leaders can help improve women's equality of opportunity through culture change by:

- Breaking down stereotypical gender role barriers embedded in workplace culture. For example, by encouraging fathers to take more parental leave to which they are entitled;
- Reassessing the historical way that companies have organised work by exploring alternatives to the nine-to-five work system, and reconsidering how childcare and other non-work commitments fit within the system; and
- Exploring the feasibility of designing workplaces that promote flexible work practices for all employees regardless of gender and family status. Mainstreaming flexibility can help to counter the association of flexible work with 'women's work'.

Engaging leaders and introducing accountability

To enable equality of opportunity in the workplace through gender diversity strategies and policies, the following is needed:

- Clear governance, accountability and leaders committed to dealing with this complex issue; and
- Embedding changes to existing systems and processes through personal responsibility for behaviours and actions, such as adding gender diversity policies to performance indicators.

Contributions

This report comprises a series of contributions that identify and discuss the barriers to equality of opportunity that women face in the workforce, at leadership levels but also in society.

In *The higher you go, the wider the gap*, Catherine Fox discusses the real reasons why so few women survive the climb up the career ladder and provides potential solutions. She argues that organisational gender gap is deeply ingrained in workplaces and supported by traditional sets of beliefs, many of which are myths that inhibit women's career progression, such as the belief that workplaces are genuine meritocracies. She recommends that a combination of factors is required to address the issue, including circuit breaking the business-as-usual mindset and re-examining the idea that women are not capable leaders.

In *Increasing gender diversity through targets with teeth*, Dr Jennifer Whelan and Professor Robert Wood analyse the effectiveness of quotas and targets and recommend conditions under which diversity targets can be made to work more effectively. They use Norway's experience with quotas to conclude that quotas are successful in increasing the number of women in the targeted roles but evoke negative reactions and do not have a lasting impact on company performance. They recommend diversity "targets with teeth", which are voluntary targets with specific goals that are embedded in organisational processes and include reward, feedback and accountability.

In *The financial impact of welfare, tax and childcare arrangements*, Professor Peter Whiteford discusses workforce female participation rates and the impact that existing tax and transfer arrangements have on families. He finds that Australia's family-based tax-transfer system gives rise to high effective marginal tax rates for second-income earners, who are usually women and can be a disincentive for mothers to work, particularly after taking into account childcare costs. He recommends careful modelling of potential policy options that would increase the participation rates of mothers, including the need to identify winners and losers.

In *The barriers to equality of opportunity in the workforce: The role of unconscious bias*, Dr Jennifer Whelan explores the role unconscious bias plays in perpetuating inequality of opportunity in the workplace. She discusses that unconscious bias manifests itself in various ways in the workplace including through gender stereotypes, such as the association of managerial roles with masculine rather than feminine traits. She recommends addressing unconscious bias through unconscious bias recognition programs and reinforcing support and networking initiatives for women.

In *The young and the restless: Gen Y and the 21st century barriers to women in leadership*, Holly Ransom examines the reasons behind the existence of inequality of opportunity barriers for Gen Y women. She discusses the role of media in perpetuating detrimental gender roles and stereotypes, suggests that women do not support each other sufficiently, and calls for a need to reframe the gender diversity debate to be more inclusive and for the agenda to be more firmly in

place in institutions. Holly also recommends mentoring programs to support the progress of younger women.

In *Succeeding in work across the life course*, Associate Professor Elizabeth Brooke, Dr Deborah Towns and Professor Nita Cherry examine the factors affecting the career progression of women in three sectors: Tertiary education, financial services, and schools and Victorian State Government services. They find that while flexible career pathways are becoming more common, they fail to support a woman's career progression. They recommend that pathways which enable work and caring responsibilities to coexist at later stages of working lives are essential, and that flexibility should be offered to both men and women to counter the association of flexibility with women's work.

In *Understanding the changing role of women in society*, Liz Ritchie discusses the social construction of gender and the impact that it has on women's participation and advancement in the workforce. She recommends that this social construct can be unpacked by men and women and that the status quo can be challenged through consciously reflecting and recognising barriers to success. She argues that while this process is difficult, it can be done and will contribute to a new culture that is more open to diverse leadership.

In *Diversity and Gender: Realities for growth in the global economy*, Dr Hannah Piterman discusses the vilification of women, the persisting view that leadership is a male paradigm, the poorly understood business case for diversity and the fact that corporate reputation is not contingent on engagement with diversity as major barriers to equality of opportunity. She recommends that leaders must step up and act now by being more accountable, enabling a more diverse leadership team and by challenging stereotypical gender assumptions.

In *How an onsite childcare centre supports CSL's female workforce*, CSL explains how it responded to poor retention of its female workforce post-maternity leave. A survey of its employees found that lack of quality childcare was a major concern and that demand for an on-site childcare facility would be high. After a feasibility study, the decision to build an on-site childcare centre was made. Maternity leave retention has risen to 90 per cent since and interestingly, 33 per cent of users of the centre are male, highlighting that the benefits accrue to everyone regardless of gender. CSL also provides additional support for families, including paid parental leave and lactation breaks.

In the *Women in Transport Campaign case study*, TNT explores how it dealt with the challenge of recruiting professionals in the transport sector, particularly with strong competition for labour from the resources sector. The company recognised that increasing the number of women in frontline operational roles would have clear labour market, internal cultural and customer service benefits. With the help of the campaign which launched in April 2012, TNT doubled the number of female drivers and dockhands it employs. The campaign targeted people, especially women, who would not typically apply for logistics jobs. TNT also enabled culture change by making its depots more female-friendly.

Acknowledgements

CEDA wishes to acknowledge the input and expert advice from the CEDA Advisory Group in the development of this policy perspective. The CEDA Advisory Group consisted of:

- Dr Martin Parkinson PSM, Secretary, Department of Treasury; and a Male Champion of Change
- Elizabeth Proust AO, Advisory Board Chairman, Bank of Melbourne; Chairman, Nestle; and a Director of Perpetual, Spotless, Insurance Manufacturers Australia and Sinclair Knight Merz
- Dr Hannah Piterman, Director of HPCG, Co-Founder of Gender Worx

Members of the advisory group provided guidance at the start of the project and input on the final recommendations. However, the final report is entirely the responsibility of CEDA and the individual authors.

CEDA Overview: Understanding the gender gap

Sarah-Jane Derby

CEDA Senior Research Analyst

Australia has made significant progress in the arena of women's rights in the past 50 years. In the past, discrimination was overt and accepted in society. Until 1974 women had to resign from the public service when they got married and were expected to be stay-at-home mums. Until 1969 many employment awards legally mandated a pay gap of 25 per cent, including in the public service. This was based on traditional beliefs about gender roles, with men being seen as the breadwinner having to provide for a wife and children, while women were seen as homemakers.

The feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960s through to the 1980s and changed women's rights in unprecedented ways. Equal pay legislation was introduced in the late 1960s and since 1979 52 weeks' unpaid maternity leave has been available to women who had been with their employers for more than 12 months. The growing availability and acceptance of contraception gave women more choice about motherhood. More progress was made in 1984 with the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act which unambiguously outlawed discrimination on the basis of gender, marital status and pregnancy.

There is no denying that things have changed since the 1960s as reflected in the narrowing of the participation gap between men and women in the workforce and at senior levels (the gender gap). Yet, the debate about equality for women and particularly the gender gap has not disappeared despite steps taken to remove legal discrimination. This begs several questions: Why is the gap persisting? Is it simply determined by the choices that women make? Or do barriers to equality of opportunity still exist?

Understanding the reasons behind the current gender gap is crucial as organisations set gender diversity policies in response to regulatory requirements and in recognition of the lost economic opportunity resulting from the gap.

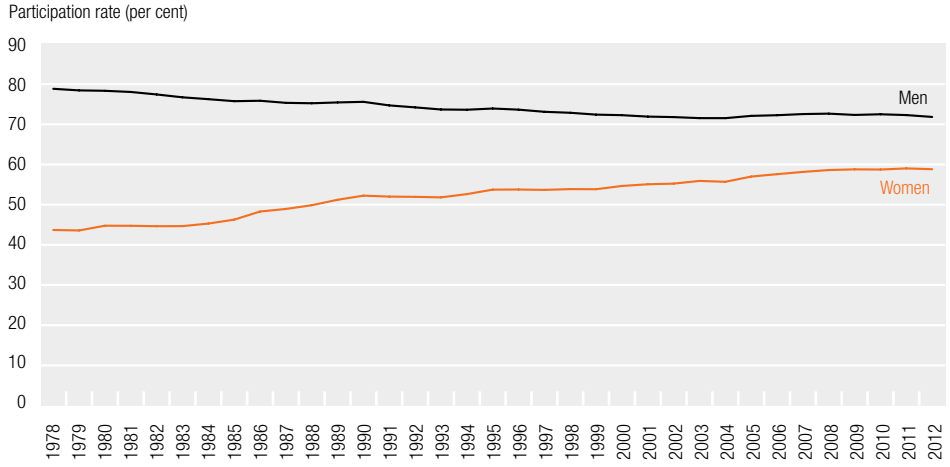
The Gender Gap: State of play

While the gender participation gap has significantly narrowed since the 1970s, the participation rate has been stagnant since the mid-2000s. As shown in Figure 1, the narrowing of the gap has stalled. This translates into lost economic opportunity. It has been claimed that closing Australia's gender participation gap could lead to an 11 per cent rise in gross domestic product (GDP).[1]

An age analysis of participation rates across several countries also reveals where Australia has a problem. While young Australian women enjoy relatively high levels of participation rates, they fall behind other advanced economies by the time they reach child-bearing age. The drop, relative to other countries, is stark, as shown in Figure 2. Examining the reasons behind the drop in the female participation rate during those years is important if we are to capitalise on our labour force capabilities.

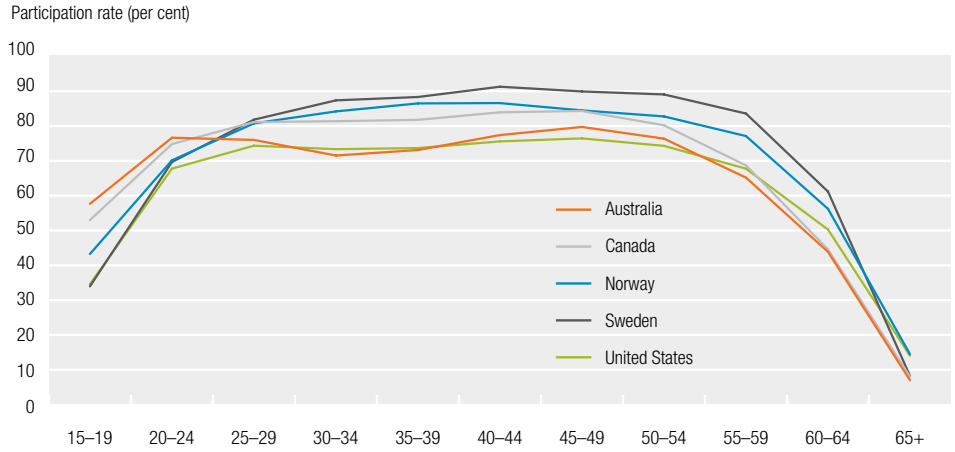
About 15.6 per cent of ASX200 directors (March 2013) are women, rising from 8.6 per cent in 2004.[2] The proportion of women in directorship positions was stagnant until 2010, coinciding with the ASX's announcement of stricter gender

FIGURE 1
GENDER PARTICIPATION GAP



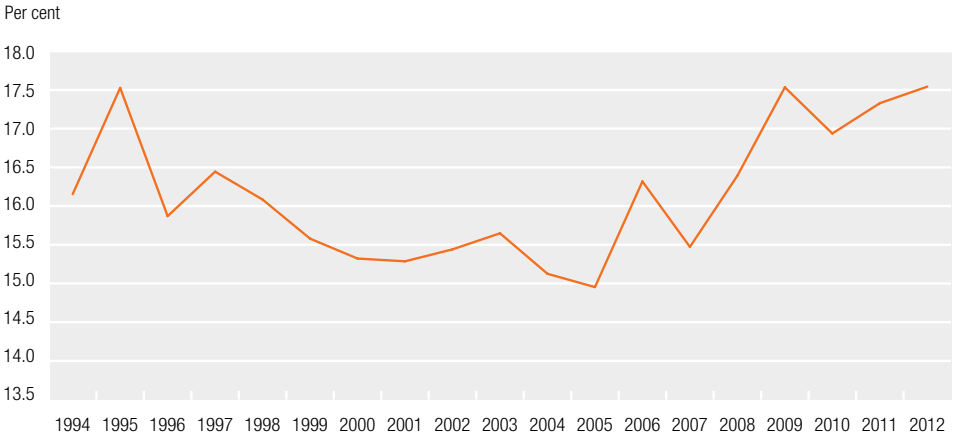
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Cat 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, 2013

FIGURE 2
FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE BY AGE GROUP



Source: OECD, Dataset: Labour Force Statistics by sex and age: Indicators, 2011

FIGURE 3
GENDER PAY GAP



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Cat 6302.0 - Average weekly earnings, 2013

diversity reporting requirements.[3] This improvement is unfortunately dampened by the managerial pipeline which tells a sobering story of slow progress. Since 2002 the proportion of female CEOs in the ASX200 has risen from 1.3 per cent to just 3.5 per cent in 2012.[4]

Since 'equal pay for equal work' was achieved in 1969, the pay gap between men and women has narrowed from 25-30 per cent to about 17.5 per cent in 2012.[5] However, as shown in Figure 3 the pay gap which compares average full-time ordinary earnings (that is, earnings of full-time workers, excluding bonuses and overtime) between men and women has been increasing in recent years after reaching a low of 15 per cent in November 2005.[6]

Salary gaps, particularly at such a broad level (Australia-wide and across all industries), can be misleading as they do not cater for years of experience, qualifications and personal career choices. However, a gender pay differential study carried out by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) concluded that about 60 per cent of the pay gap cannot be explained by reasons such as experience.[7] In other words, the majority of the pay gap is explained by

FIGURE 4
PAY GAP BY STATE

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Cat 6302.0 – Average weekly earnings, 2013

gender alone. They found that reducing the gender pay gap by one percentage point would boost GDP by about $5.4 billion (2007 dollars) while closing the pay gap completely would increase GDP by $93 billion.[8] Again, the gender gap represents foregone economic opportunity for Australia.

An analysis of graduate salaries further supports the hypothesis that discrimination still exists in respect to wages and gender. If equality of opportunity exists regardless of gender then it would be expected that graduate salaries would be equal for men and women, as the usual reasons for non-discriminatory pay inequality (e.g. experience) would not typically apply. However, Graduate Careers Australia has found that in 2012 the median starting salary of bachelor degree graduates in first full-time employment and aged less than 25 was $55,000 for men and $50,000 for women, or a 9.1 per cent gap.[9] This gap was only 3.8 per cent in 2011.[10]

As noted in Figure 4 the gender pay gap is worse in some Australian states than in others. The gap is widest in Western Australia, which is reflective of the significance of the male-dominated resources sector where average wages are typically much higher than the national average. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has one of the lowest gaps reflecting the concentration of the Australian public service.

Towards equality of opportunity

In recent years, the government and organisations have recognised the lost economic opportunities resulting from the gender gap. To tackle the issue, industry and the government have introduced corporate governance reporting requirements for diversity, including gender. ASX-listed companies are required to report against a number of measurable factors and explain if they do not have a gender diversity plan. In April 2013 the government also introduced stricter gender reporting obligations for non-public companies with over 100 employees.

Establishing targets is becoming more common in organisations as one way of enshrining equality of opportunity for women. They are less prescriptive than quotas and provide a measurable and achievable diversity goal.[11] In most instances, targets are for women in senior roles. While the focus on these senior roles is an important issue, addressing the dearth of women at the top of the corporate ladder does not necessarily address the issues women in the pipeline face. Women account for more than half of professionals but represent less than 10 per cent of line executives.[12] This percentage increases slightly for women on boards reflecting adoption of policies by boards, often driven by media scrutiny. Norway's experience with quotas for women on boards reflects the lack of trickle-down effect for women in executive roles.[13] In other words, targets do not necessarily address the core reasons behind the persistence of the gap.

While there is no denying that women's and men's choices and preferences play a role in the persistence of the gap and lack of trickle-down effect, barriers to equality of opportunity are well and truly reflected in modern Australia. In a recent CEDA survey of the business community, 93.2 per cent of respondents said they believe there are barriers to women's equality in the workplace. Despite anti-discrimination legislation, 51.1 per cent of respondents, overwhelmingly women, reported having been discriminated against on the basis of gender. Understanding and addressing the 21st century barriers to equality will help to improve women's participation rate in the workforce and at senior levels and will help to narrow the salary gap. It will provide a level playing field for employees, regardless of gender, and will enable women to make less constrained career choices.

Contributors to this policy perspective and respondents to the *Women in Leadership* survey identified the key barriers to equality of opportunity, which will be discussed in the following sections. They include the failure of meritocracy due to unconscious bias; ingrained beliefs and traditions, including the way we organise work and the persistence of stereotypical gender roles; workplace culture; the cost of childcare; and the lack of mentoring and role models. A list of all barriers identified by survey respondents can be found in Appendix I.

The failure of meritocracy

Workplaces rest on the basis of meritocracy and merit is frequently cited as the reason why gender diversity strategies are not needed. The flaw in that argument is that meritocracies fail for reasons that are not intentional or overt, namely, unconscious bias. Human beings form unconscious knowledge when they are exposed to existing associations and relationships, leading to 'auto-pilot' thinking that can lead to unconscious bias.[14] Unconscious bias is usually present in both men and women.

Unconscious bias manifests itself in workplaces, for example, through the association of leadership and managerial roles with men rather than women. As a result, men are unconsciously perceived as a better fit for leadership roles. Women who display characteristics associated with men face a backlash from recruiters and

are penalised for those 'un-stereotypical' traits.[15] These associations are unintentional and unconscious. The HR manager who grew up with a stay-at-home mum may unconsciously dismiss the qualifications of a woman applying for a leadership role. An interview panel may think they are being fair and unbiased, when in fact they are hiring someone who looks and sounds like them[16], even if a different candidate has similar qualifications.

There are several ways in which organisations can help make workplaces meritocracies. Organisations can raise awareness regarding areas of unconscious bias and address them through easily available unconscious bias tools. They can educate employees about gender diversity and the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes to minimise reinforcement of these stereotypes. Organisations can also perform structured pay audits to identify potential gender pay gaps brought about by unconscious bias or other unseen but unfair factors.

The assumption that recruitment selection processes are meritocratic does not always hold. Speaking at a CEDA event in 2012[17], Christine Nixon, former Victorian Police Commissioner, gave the anecdote of the seven-foot wall that applicants to the Victorian police force were required to climb over as part of the application process. This task systematically excluded women from joining the force as most were unable to climb over the wall and would give up. The wall, in this example, is a selection criterion that is not linked to future on-the-job performance. Recruitments should re-examine recruitment selection processes, which may not be as meritocratic as assumed.[18] Selection criteria should be clearly linked with job performance to ensure that largest possible pool of talent is available without systematically excluding minority groups through arbitrary criteria. Processes should be revisited to encourage more creative and innovative talent search strategies.[19]

Men and women should be on a level playing field when it comes to career development and opportunities. Organisations can help to improve women's opportunity in the workplace through mentoring programs or other initiatives designed to develop women's careers and equip them with leadership skills. Encouraging men to mentor younger women helps to include men in the gender debate, while female mentors can act as role models for younger women.

Addressing cultural impediments

The way we organise work is an inheritance of the industrial revolution, when workplaces were designed with production lines and male workers in mind[20] and as a result reflect traditional Western male values.[21] Despite the fact that society has moved away from the traditional breadwinner/homemaker stereotype, the way we work has not changed to reflect this change, including the fact that double-income households still have caring and household responsibilities.

This is reflected in the lack of harmonisation of family, school hours and holidays and other non-work responsibilities with nine-to-five workplaces. In order to improve the equality of opportunity of women and any other primary carers in the

workforce, organisations and the government should reassess the historical way that industry has organised work and the way in which non-work commitments fit within the work system.

Flexibility is a crucial factor in changing the design of work. However, flexibility continues to be associated with women[22] and with low ambition or commitment.[23] Organisations continue to define productivity as long working hours and 24/7 availability[24] to the detriment of work/life balance. Organisations should reassess how productivity is measured and explore the feasibility of designing workplaces that promote flexible work practices for all employees regardless of gender and family status. Mainstreaming flexibility can help to counter the association of flexible work with 'women's work' and ensure that the policy is inclusive.[25]

Changing workplace design and culture is by no means an easy task. However, workplace culture has been changed before. The public service, which is today one of the most egalitarian workplaces, used to require women to resign from its service when they married. Many companies are already working on changing workplace culture and design. As an example, TNT Australia has numerous strategies to make the male-dominated world of warehousing more attractive to women.[26] This step, while simple, is crucial in changing the traditional way of organising work. CSL, a pharmaceutical company, provides on-site childcare facilities which are open to the public and available to its employees under preferential arrangements.[27]

Stereotypical gender roles are deeply ingrained into society and reflected in the way we allocate household chores and unpaid caring work. Women continue to undertake significantly more unpaid work than men even when both work full-time.[28] While societal gender role stereotypes are difficult to break down, organisations can have a role to play by enabling equal partnership between men and women at work and in society. For example, organisations could encourage fathers to take more parental leave, thereby sharing caring responsibilities more equally with mothers. CSL reports that 33 per cent of its on-site childcare centre users are male, which suggests that culture may be changing.

The media plays a role in the way gender roles are reinforced and powerful women are portrayed. Advertisements often portray women as homemakers or happily performing domestic chores, while men are portrayed as either blokey or stupid and incompetent when it comes to household chores and caring. In mainstream media and movies, women are often portrayed as motherly, domestic or in sexualised roles rather than holding leadership roles.[29] Senior women or female leaders are often harshly judged for what they wear, the colour of their hair or other physical characteristics.[30] Prime Minister Julia Gillard has also been vilified through verbal slurs related to her gender.[31]

In order to address the perpetuation of stereotypical gender roles, the media industry itself should give consideration to establishing a non-regulatory, voluntary body that would conduct and publish independent research on the portrayal of women in the media. It would aim to sustain an informed public conversation about the messages presented and the unconscious bias within them. Such a body, similar to the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media[32], could drive collaborative initiatives to change the way women are portrayed in the media.

The childcare conundrum

CEDA members and event attendees who are business professionals at all career levels commonly identify childcare as a significant issue for women in the workforce. This is reflected in the drop in the participation rate for women of child-bearing age as noted in Figure 2. The childcare issue refers to the dimensions of accessibility, affordability, quality and acceptability. Despite being identified as a major factor, formal childcare policy work in Australia is limited, partly because of existing social mores. Women can face criticism if they choose to have their children cared for by someone else and focus on their careers instead.[33] The recent introduction of 24-hour childcare centre trials in some parts of the country is a sign that acceptance may be on the way. However, the cost of childcare continues to be a contentious issue.

The interaction of the tax and transfer system, including the Family Tax Benefit, and the Child Care Benefit and Rebate can act as a disincentive for many women to return to work after childbirth[34], with participation rates particularly low for single-parent women.[35] A 2004 OECD report found that in OECD countries, childcare subsidies lead to a rise in the female participation rate, while child benefits, similar to the ones in place in Australia, reduce the participation rate.[36] Many OECD countries have different taxation and social welfare systems from Australia and are consequently not directly comparable. However, the government should undertake modelling of potential policy reforms around existing childcare and family benefit arrangements to ensure that women are not disincentivised from participating in the workforce. Modelling should also identify all the potential winners and losers.[37]

Conclusion

Despite the progress made over the past 50 years, Australia still has a long way to go to achieve equality of opportunity. The failure of meritocratic processes due to unconscious bias, gender stereotypes and the reinforcement of those stereotypes, the way we have historically designed and organised work without much thought to non-work responsibilities, lack of mentoring and role models, and the prohibitive cost of childcare are all barriers to gender equality in the workplace. Societal barriers such as the persistence of traditional gender roles may not seem to have a place in corporations; however, they, along with the perpetuation of these roles by the media, continue to hold women's careers back. These barriers must be addressed to ensure that we narrow the gender gap. With strong commitment and leadership, clear governance and accountability the changes and reforms needed to progress towards equality can become tangible and deliver benefits to every Australian.

Endnotes

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1. The higher you go, the wider the gap

Catherine Fox

This chapter explores the real reasons so few women survive the climb up the career ladder and what to do about it.

Catherine Fox is a journalist, author and public speaker with a particular interest in women and the workforce, workforce trends, management and career. During a long career with the Financial Review she edited several sections of the publication, and wrote the Corporate Woman column. She was deputy editor of Boss magazine for several years before leaving the AFR in 2012.

Catherine has written three books and her latest, Seven Myths about Women and Work (New South) was released in August 2012. She is on several advisory boards, including the Defence Force Gender Equality Advisory Board.

The 12 female CEOs running ASX500 companies in this country make up a select and successful group. But the size of this particular cohort is barely believable in 2013. Decades after the first wave of women began emerging from higher education and entering the workplace, there is plenty of robust evidence that reveals a continuing dismal lack of women in the mid to senior ranks of listed companies in Australia, and a gender gap that widens the further up the ladder you go. Little wonder that the women who have reached the rarefied environment of the C-suite can virtually be identified by their first names.

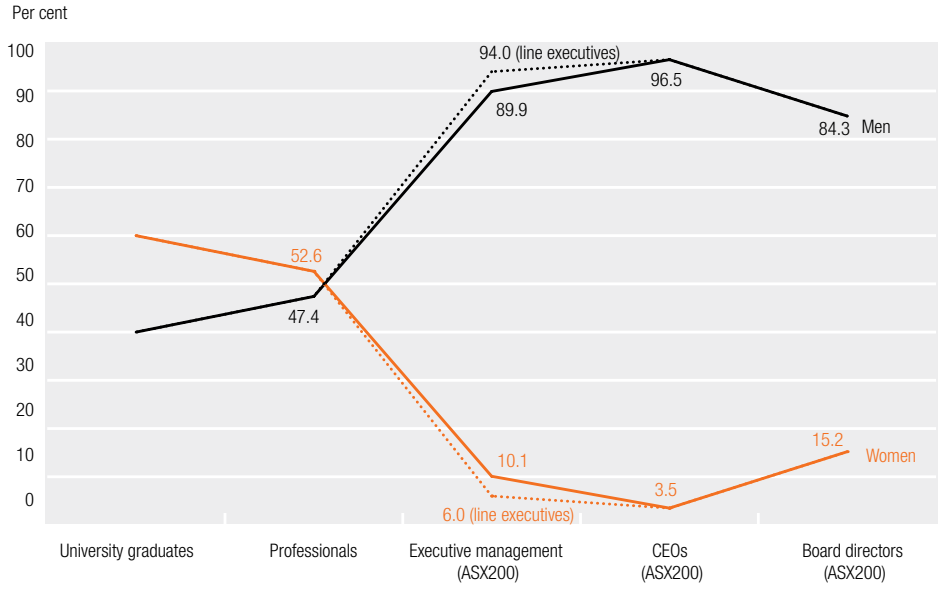
The latest data makes depressing reading. Released in late 2012 by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)[1], the Australian Census of Women in Leadership shows women make up three per cent of CEOs at ASX500 companies, nine per cent of executive management and nine per cent of board directors (although 15.1 per cent of ASX200 board directors are now women).

Men in large Australian businesses have a nine times better chance of making it to senior executive ranks than women, despite women graduating from university at higher rates than men since 1985, according to the latest Bain and Chief Executive Women study[2] released in February 2013.

When this is translated into a graph[3] the gender discrepancy is particularly stark.

The research also notes the gender gap persists in the face of data showing men and women register almost equal levels of ambition for senior leadership positions. So why does this frankly dire pattern continue?

FIGURE 1
GENDER DISCREPANCY IN THE WORKPLACE



Note: Reproduced from *Creating a positive cycle: Critical steps to achieving gender parity in Australia*, Bain/Chief Executive Women 2013

Sources: Higher education statistics (DIISTRE 2012); professionals (ABS, Cat 4125.0, January 2012); executive management and CEOs (EOWA 2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership, based on April 2012 data); board directors (AICD, December 2012)

The complexity conundrum

There is no simple answer because gender inequity is deeply embedded in social and workforce norms, traditional divisions of labour and breadwinner roles, established family and marriage dynamics, and a strong adherence to gender stereotypes. Addressing the discrimination that emerges in organisations from this combination is daunting enough; but it is also hampered by a delusional belief that behaviour in the workplace is consistently rational and evidence-based in the pursuit of maximum efficiency, motivation and productivity.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the complexity and breadth of this problem – and indeed the reaction often provoked by even mentioning gender equality or sexism – has also hindered serious efforts by business to identify and alter the systemic barriers that prevent women moving into leadership. With few exceptions, this business problem has been low on the agenda and, even worse, often regarded as a trivial side issue. When a flurry of activity emerged in 2009 following a number of reports showing poor levels of women in leadership, and a lively discussion on quotas, there was enough momentum to introduce new diversity reporting guidelines for ASX entities and an increase in women appointed to boards. The results were welcome but have been limited, as the WGEA data shows.

Even when the lack of female managers and leaders is raised, it's been fashionable in business discussions to focus automatically on a set of perceived female

inadequacies and stereotypes. An unspoken assumption is made that women, as a cohort, need simply to conform to a largely objective and unbiased set of workforce parameters to succeed. They are also exhorted to make 'the business case' for women's participation in general, and their right to earn a share of the power and rewards of high office.

This framework for viewing the organisational gender gap is so deeply ingrained it has only recently been critically examined, as a welcome raft of qualitative research reveals the behavioural and economic factors behind the depressing statistics and the enduring myths about women and their workforce status. These myths act as the scaffolding to support traditional practices and an alarming inertia which continues to hamper attempts to address gender discrimination in organisations, particularly among the senior ranks.

The most damaging myths are still widely circulated: workplaces are genuine meritocracies, the gender pay gap is exaggerated, mothers in the workforce lack ambition or drive, if women behaved like men they would succeed, quotas and targets for women in management are unnecessary, there are not enough qualified women for senior jobs, and problems will resolve themselves over time (the pipeline theory).

Analysing and refuting the myths highlights why so little progress has been made to bridge the gender gap in senior levels and identifies the real inhibitors to change and the actions needed to enhance women's career progress.

"The reliance on traditional notions of leadership and highly subjective practices has played a major role in preventing the formation of meritocracies. Unfortunately, reliance on the concept provides yet another excuse for doing nothing."

The myth of merit

While few would argue with the idea that those with merit should be rewarded, the assumption that all workplaces by default consistently operate in this way needs to be closely examined. Given the composition of the top ranks of Australian companies, it would seem that merit resides in a particularly narrow cohort of white, middle-aged men. A glance at some key statistics shows why this composition is an anomaly and not a natural reflection of merit: women now make up 60 per cent of higher education graduates, have been joining the workforce for decades and make up nearly half of all employees. The absence of sufficient business 'merit' in one gender and not the other therefore seems particularly difficult to explain.

Challenging the merit myth must involve scrutiny of recruitment and promotion criteria and related policies for bias, along with identification of informal norms within organisations. This was the subject of a study[4] by US consulting firm Catalyst, *The Unwritten Rules*, which found women in particular are excluded from important informal networks in companies and miss out on opportunities for promotion and other forms of talent management such as secondments.

The reliance on traditional notions of leadership and highly subjective practices has played a major role in preventing meritocracies from forming. Unfortunately,

reliance on the concept provides yet another excuse for doing nothing. When a management team believes they give everyone a fair go, there is no motivation to examine or change the way the system operates. The scores of women who cluster below the glass ceiling and are told they work in a meritocracy must find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that their gender means they lack a set of essential skills, regardless of their experience or qualifications.

> "According to the 2011 study by Bain and Chief Executive Women , men in senior jobs thought men were twice as good as women executives in problem solving which is obviously a fundamental criteria for management roles."

Turning the lens to examine bias in the senior men who make most of the decisions about appointments and promotions reveals a very different story. Time and time again, research shows that the people making these crucial appointments are much more likely to select candidates who look and sound like them. This was recently corroborated by a study in US law and consulting firms[5] by Lauren Rivera, from Northwestern University's School of Management.

After three years of research, Rivera found that "similarity was the most common mechanism employers used to assess applicants at the job interview stage" and that "hirers at these elite firms favour people like themselves". One law firm partner told her that the company was "looking for cultural compatibility, someone who will fit in". More than half of the 120 people she interviewed rated the candidates' ability to fit in culturally above analytical thinking and communication skills.

But when it comes to those executive skills women also run up against invisible barriers. According to the 2011 study by Bain and Chief Executive Women[6], men in senior jobs thought men were twice as good as female executives at problem solving – a fundamental criteria for management roles. This was not a question of a failure to deliver results – women were seen as just as effective as men in performance terms. But the style they used to go about their work was marked down. Hardly surprising then that many women find their progress into the top ranks is derailed long before they are anywhere near the summit.

Merit, it seems, is a goal and not a reality in most businesses. It is a fine ideal, but we are a long way from being able to accurately describe most Australian workplaces as meritocracies. Propping up this myth acts as an excuse for being complacent and failing to change the system, or for the profile of the top team. It thus acts as a key inhibitor to women trying to climb the ladder by eroding their confidence, sending a strong signal they are simply not up to senior jobs and, of course, depriving them of role models.

The gender pay gap is exaggerated

Most Australians, according to numerous studies, do not believe men and women should be paid differently for doing the same or similar jobs. But despite this goodwill, the gender pay gap remains at 17.4 per cent on average, and is wider in certain sectors, states and job ranks. While the pay gap is often assumed to develop around career breaks for having children, it seems other factors are also at play.

Recent research from the US[7] found that while women overall have begun closing the gender pay gap, female graduates of top US business schools in their first post-MBA jobs haven't fared as well. The study found that starting salaries for women graduating in 2012 averaged US$105,059, or $8300 (7.3 per cent) less than their male counterparts. Ten years earlier, women earned $83,404, or $1849 (2.2 per cent) less than men.

In Australia, a similar graduate pay gap exists. The 2012 GradStats[8] report shows median full-time starting salaries for male graduates are $55,000 (up from $52,000 in 2011), compared to $50,000 for women (no change from 2011). The current graduate gender pay gap across all occupations is 9.1 per cent.

Graduates are more likely to make up the professional and managerial cohort in organisations, and therefore the main catchment for leadership ranks. The pay gap so early in their career suggests their efforts are already undervalued compared to their male peers. Far from being exaggerated, there has been a distinct lack of attention given to such discrepancies and their effect on the gender pay gap further up the career ladder.

Women who have had a career break for children do, of course, suffer a penalty to their wages that also compounds over time. But with the gap emerging a year after joining the workforce, many professional women are no doubt already paid less than men before having families. This failure to earn at the same level as male peers even if they do the same work partly explains why so few women find themselves motivated and encouraged to make it up the ranks.

Even sectors which traditionally employ more women than men are not exempt from the gender pay gap. According to Australian researcher Ian Watson of Macquarie University, the gender pay gap among full-time managers in Australia between 2001 and 2007 was around 27 per cent, and the earnings differential cannot be explained by a large range of demographic and labour market variables. In fact, he found as much as 70 per cent of the gap is "simply due to women managers being female".[9]

The data on the pay gap is robust and consistent. Much of the analysis has found that factors such as a lack of transparency and subjectivity about pay scales and bonus payments add to the problem. Concentration on what is contributing to the gap, plus practical measures such as structured pay audits to identify the scale of the differences, are the first steps needed to help redress the situation.

The motherhood myth

There are two deeply held beliefs in Australia – that a good mother stays home with her children and a serious worker is available 24x7 and has no obvious family commitments, according to Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. These are unrealistic and dated ideas that still exert a surprising amount of influence on workplace attitudes.

Paid maternity leave and flexible work are now more widely accessible in larger organisations. But childcare remains expensive and difficult to find, and women with children are over-represented in casual jobs. Many women in lower income

jobs find that remaining attached to the workplace while their children are small is a major challenge (and, of course, compromises their ability to accrue superannuation). Women in Australia are still expected to bear the brunt of domestic and caring responsibilities and shoulder 66 per cent of this workload[10] – a ratio that has not changed much in the last 20 years.

For well-educated women aspiring to executive roles the motherhood penalties are more subtle but ultimately represent significant inhibitors. Stepping back from full-time work is mostly considered career suicide for those in professional and managerial jobs, despite some recent rhetoric to the contrary. For many women who have graduated and built up their experience in their twenties, their childbearing years coincide neatly with critical career stages. Time out of the workplace means lost opportunities for experience and assignments that are the stepping stones to senior jobs.

"The motherhood bias hinges on a deeply embedded stereotype. Identifying and addressing this form of discrimination is a highly sensitive process which can be personally confronting particularly to senior men executives who are disproportionately likely to have stay-at-home partners."

But even if this was changed – and it is possible to restructure pathways to seniority over long careers – the attitudes towards mothers in the workplace remains mainly punitive. In a famous study on the motherhood penalty, Stanford academic Shelly Correll[11] found mothers were harshly judged by recruiters and faced a range of penalties in their jobs, which depressed their salaries and prospects. Men with children were not judged as harshly and on some measures benefited from having children.

The motherhood bias hinges on a deeply embedded stereotype. Identifying and addressing this form of discrimination is a highly sensitive process which can be personally confronting, particularly to senior male executives, who are disproportionately likely to have stay-at-home partners. But it is a crucial step in enabling women the tenure and pathway needed to reach senior ranks.

Women need to act like men – the deficit myth

When the dearth of women in management is analysed, one of the routine responses is to attribute the problem to female failure. Thus women in professional and management roles are often told their negotiating skills are poor, or that they lack confidence, problem solving skills (see above) and leadership presence. Their style of operating is generally regarded as lacking or ineffective and in many cases the alternative set of desirable skills bears an uncanny resemblance to a traditional alpha male approach. Highly subjective as these assessments are, they also carry the false expectation that there is a set formula for behaviour on the job that is clear-cut and attainable no matter what your gender, race or creed.

The deficit or remedial approach to women's behaviour has helped to entrench rather than address the barriers women face. It focuses on the personal rather than the system and context women operate in, it creates false hope of a relatively swift remedy to sexism, and it urges women to adjust to a workplace designed by and for male breadwinners. It leaves many women perplexed, angry

and demotivated. Hardly an ideal state of mind when you are already fighting the odds to access the development and support needed to get ahead.

There is a growing body of evidence to debunk this myth. In fact, women find there are a series of penalties that come into play for behaving more assertively, as an Australian study into pay negotiations found. Melbourne Business School academic Mara Olekhans[12] discovered that women encountered a complex set of penalties when they stepped outside the feminine stereotype by being assertive in performance reviews and pay negotiations.

Indeed, the idea that all women are naturally reluctant to ask for a pay rise, the opportunity for management experience or a promotion is a gross generalisation. In a major study on this topic Catalyst surveyed over 3000 MBA graduates[13] and revealed women do indeed use the prescribed levers to get ahead at work (requesting high-profile assignments, communicating with the bosses and telling them their goals). But these strategies simply didn't have the same positive effect on their career trajectory as it did on men's, nor on their salaries.

"Women find there are a series of penalties that come into play for behaving more assertively, as an Australian study into pay negotiations found."

It's important to understand the deficit myth in order for women to learn what they can do to circumvent the blocks they face and why they will not necessarily get the same outcomes as their male peers. Catalyst suggests women ensure managers know about their accomplishments, seek feedback, seek credit when due and ask for a promotion when it is deserved. Tenacity is a major advantage in this process.

When women's style and leadership is actively reinforced as illegitimate, ineffective and weak there is continuing pressure for all women to get a makeover or suffer the consequences. However, there is little evidence that women trying to behave like authoritarian men have had any enduring success in climbing the ladder. More unpacking of the deficit model will clarify why this is a redundant strategy that replicates old models of leadership. Such scrutiny could save organisations much time and money in developing tools that help women without offering false promises.

Quotas and targets are unnecessary

The debate over legislated quotas for women on boards and the use of targets for women in management has certainly become more vigorous in recent times but the reaction has gone in different directions. Strong opposition to quotas remains entrenched, while a series of Australia's largest companies have introduced targets. As quotas are mandatory, they are viewed by many in the business community as heavy-handed and having potentially harmful repercussions. Targets are voluntary and viewed as useful tools to measure progress towards better gender parity, particularly since ASX introduced new diversity reporting measures for listed companies.

Quotas, the critics argue, force companies to make appointments and could result in tokenism. Women themselves would suffer from this and it could also hamper progress. It is much better to use soft regulation and encourage more appointments than to force the question. Many women agree with this argument and fear they would be given roles to fill a quota and not due to their abilities. However, the sheer number of experienced and qualified women in the business sector makes tokenism unlikely these days.

This fear of tokenism does not seem to have hampered the introduction of targets in many organisations. The timescale for reaching these aims – usually targets for women in management are set between 30 and 40 per cent – is generally flexible, but the reality is dawning that targets alone are necessary but insufficient. Women need to be supported and developed to reach these roles, which means setting goals helps to focus corporate attention on the issue.

Quotas are likely to remain in the too-hard basket for the business sector but the discussion has already served an important purpose. Businesses have started to report on progress, gather data and use metrics in a way that was inconceivable just a few years ago. The pressure to monitor the gender gap is unlikely to diminish.

There are not enough women

Women are in the workforce in ever-increasing numbers, with their workforce participation increasing to 65.3 per cent in 2011 from 60.3 per cent in 2009.[14] More are staying in their paid jobs even with young children (under five years of age), with the number of women in this category increasing from 61 to 66 per cent between 2001 and 2009.[15] And they are pouring out of universities, with women awarded more than 60 per cent of undergraduate degrees in Australia. About 66 per cent of law school graduates are now women.

Overall, women currently make up 47 per cent of the workforce. In the face of such data it is difficult to maintain the myth of female scarcity, which is often an excuse to justify a failure to support, develop and promote women at the same rate as men. But as we have seen, the lack of women in contention for executive jobs is a result of a series of derailments and context-related decisions as they move through their careers. With less access to the levers needed for senior roles and marked down as lacking core leadership skills, many women are dismissed as potential candidates for higher office well before they are within striking distance. Little wonder they find their motivation and confidence sapped and start to blame themselves for their failures.

The gender gap in senior jobs is not a result of too few women but too few promotions and role models. More women at the top is the single most important factor in retaining women[16] as the Bain and Chief Executive Women research found. Women are most negative in the middle years of junior and middle management, which is a critical career-building stage according to the study. Many women at this stage perceive that their style may be viewed as a barrier to progression. This often leads women to question if pushing past the barriers to promotion is achievable when they don't see other women being successful. This is particularly

the case if they face work–life trade-offs, with the research highlighting that many women start families at this career stage.

Time will heal all

When organisations finally recognise there is a gender parity problem, a common reaction is to claim time will change the complexion of the C-suite. The pipeline of well-educated women in the workforce will automatically transform the upper echelons, according to this thinking. But as the myths reveal, there is very little evidence to support this position and much to challenge it. The glacial progression of women into leadership has not changed in more than a decade – in fact, the small progress is tantamount to a slide backwards given the growth of the economy.

Generational change is also held out as a panacea for the gender gap in senior ranks. This is built on the hope that a new group of people will take over the reins and change the dynamics and standards of workplaces. But once again, there is a dearth of evidence for this assumption. Even the IT sector, which is generally seen as demanding the skills and aptitudes associated with a younger age group, has virtually no women in its managerial ranks. The Facebook IPO in 2012 was notable on a number of levels, including the fact the seven-member board did not include a single woman (Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg was appointed afterward). There is a tiny number of women in the top management of Silicon Valley's best-known enterprises.

"Generational change is also held out as a panacea for the gender gap in senior ranks… but once again, there is a dearth of evidence for this assumption. Even the IT sector which is generally seen as demanding the skills and aptitudes associated with a younger age group has virtually no women in its managerial ranks."

Generational change and the pipeline are great in theory but remain unproven in practice. Relying on time to change gender levels has been a disappointing, passive and time-wasting exercise.

Bridging the gap

Dismantling historically biased attitudes and behaviour patterns to allow women to climb the career ladder in greater numbers will require a robust dismantling of the myths that fuel them, along with the will and means to remove systemic barriers. Given it is mainly men who make key decisions in Australian business at the moment, they will have to be convinced of this necessity and then motivated to act.

In the meantime, a combination of factors is required to address this issue and create a positive cycle. It's about circuit-breaking the business-as-usual mindset, perhaps through quotas, as well as re-examining the mechanics in recruitment

and promotion practices to allow a critical mass of the role models so desperately needed. Most important is the presence of women in leadership – women are five times more likely to be promoters of their organisation when females represent more than 25 per cent of the executive team.[17]

Women are held up to double standards that ensure they are judged differently to men at every step of their career, in the community and in the family. Their failure to climb the corporate ladder in decent numbers is not about a talent and experience bypass but entrenched discrimination built on familiar models of authority and the idea that difference is synonymous with risk.

The myths make it clear that as well as re-examining the idea that women are biologically incapable of higher office, it's also time to modify the expectation that the elite group that runs our major institutions will happily share the power and influence they wield. Countless arguments based on logic and on the business case that shows the boost to national productivity from better gender balance have failed to create a major change. There is nothing in corporate history or the feminist annals to suggest this is likely to happen smoothly or without a struggle. But happen it must.

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2. Increasing gender diversity through targets with teeth

Dr Jennifer Whelan
Professor Robert Wood

This chapter explores the effectiveness of gender quotas and targets in the workplace and options for improvement.

Jennifer Whelan completed her PhD in social psychology at the University of Melbourne after extensive experience working in human resource management. She has since worked as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Psychology and at the Melbourne Business School, and was Research Manager of the Centre for Ethical Leadership's Gender Equality Project. Her areas of research include the social psychological process implicated in group identity, political judgement and decision-making, stereotyping and prejudice, attitude change, automatic social cognition, and unconscious bias. She has published research on emotion regulation, attitudes towards migrants and national identity, psychological essentialism, gender diversity and leadership.

Jennifer is currently a Research Fellow at the Asia Pacific Social Impact Leadership Centre. Her research work focuses on developing innovative basic and applied research programs to address prejudice, stereotyping, bias and social equality. Her current work examines the myths around meritocracy, the paradoxical discriminatory effects of merit-based organisational practices, and over-coming obstacles to employment for marginalised populations, in particular, people with disability. Jennifer is also director of Psynapse Psychometrics, an unconscious bias assessment and development diagnostics provider working with large organisations on unconscious bias and competence.

Robert (Bob) Wood is Professor of Management and Director of the Centre for Ethical Leadership at Melbourne Business School. In 2009 he served on the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council's Expert Working Group on Transforming Learning in Society. Bob has been an advisor to many corporations and government bodies, including the OECD (Paris) and the Hong Kong Government, Dow Chemical, Saudi Aramco, DP World, Qantas, IAG, Telstra, Macquarie Bank, ANZ, and NAB. He is a Fellow of SIOP, ASSA, IAAP and ANZAM, and former editor of Applied Psychology an International Review. Bob's research covers the topics of leadership, learning, ethics and problem solving.

Despite the increasingly well-documented benefits of greater gender diversity, existing organisational strategies appear to have peaked in their impact on the numbers of women employed in senior leadership positions.[1] The underemployment and underutilisation of women is costly, both in national economic terms and within individual organisations.

A historical overview of the state of women's ascension to seniority in organisations shows a pattern of slow progress across many countries, with step increases typically following regulatory and other policy interventions. In Australia, the number of women on the boards of ASX200 listed companies increased from about eight per cent in 2004 to 14 per cent in 2012, with the majority of that increase occurring in the last two years, likely in anticipation of the introduction of mandatory gender reporting by listed companies, a policy ASX introduced in 2011. However, about a quarter of ASX200 companies still have no women on their boards at all. A recent survey by Chief Executive Women and Dun & Bradstreet in Australia found that there has been even less progress in private companies, with about 75 per cent of small to medium-sized company CEOs reporting that they neither had nor intended to promote any women to senior positions.[2]

In 2003, Norway was the first country to pass legislation mandating quotas for women's representation on listed company boards. The quota sets a requirement for 40:40:20 representation (40 per cent male, 40 per cent female representation, with the remaining 20 per cent of either gender) and the proportion of women on boards increased from just seven per cent before the legislation to 40.3 per cent in 2010. In the United Kingdom, the percentage of female directors rose from 0.6 per cent in 1974 to 9.9 per cent in 2001, and as of 2012 sits at 12.5 per cent.[3] One in five FTSE250 companies have no women on their boards at all, and women hold just two per cent of board chairs. In the United States, the number of women on the boards of Fortune 500 companies increased from around nine per cent in 1995 to 16 per cent in 2011, with virtually no improvement between 2005 and 2011.

> "This slow rate of progress toward gender equality in the senior ranks of organisations…has led to proposals for alternative strategies, such as gender targets and mandated quotas to accelerate the advancement of women to boards and other senior organisational positions…"

This slow rate of progress toward gender equality in the senior ranks of organisations, plus the evidence for increases following policy interventions, has led to proposals for alternative strategies. These include gender targets and mandated quotas to accelerate women's advancement to boards and other senior organisational positions, and to realise the benefits that diversity has been shown to produce. However, most business leaders contest this view and argue that the external imposition of quotas will violate the principle of merit and add to businesses' regulatory burden.

With the intention of progressing this debate, we will present evidence for the effects of quotas and targets and related evidence for anticipating and managing their effects. Our recommendation is for adopting 'targets with teeth', and we will outline the requirements to make the strategy work. We begin with a brief overview of different gender diversity strategies.

Gender diversity strategies

Targets and quotas are two of a range of strategies and practices that organisations can adopt as part of their policies on diversity and inclusion. More broadly, strategies aimed at increasing gender diversity can focus on any number of steps in the chain of activities that starts with talent search and carries through recruitment, development and promotion.

'Push', or supply, strategies focus on the processes through which women are selected, are developed, and attain seniority in an organisation. These include training and development processes that aim to increase the number of women with the required skills and experience to be eligible for senior roles, and extend to support strategies such as mentoring and networking programs for female employees.

Other strategies for increasing the number of female candidates for leadership roles include targeted search and selection strategies and steps to reduce the effects of bias against qualified female candidates. Interventions in the selection processes can range from weak preferential selection, where a woman will be chosen if she is at least as suitable as a male candidate, to strong preferential selection, where gender is itself a selection criteria and a woman may be selected even if she is less suitable than a male candidate.

In contrast to push strategies – which seek to increase the supply of qualified female candidates for leadership roles – gender diversity targets and quotas are examples of 'pull', or demand, strategies, in that they focus on actual diversity outcomes. Under quotas or targets, managers are responsible for achieving the assigned level of diversity and also for discovering the strategies to achieve their goals. Depending on the availability of qualified women for particular roles and the effectiveness of push strategies in increasing the supply of qualified women, diversity targets or quotas may pose a significant and novel challenge for managers.

Quotas

Quotas for gender representation are generally legislated, mandatory requirements for a specific proportion of women in specific roles or at a particular level in an organisation, almost exclusively aimed at board level. They are generally enforced through regulatory and reporting processes and accompanied by some form of penalty for non-compliance. The level of female representation specified by quotas can vary, but they commonly require a 40:40:20 rule stipulating 40 per cent male and 40 per cent female representation, with the remaining 20 per cent of either gender, ensuring relative gender balance rather than exact

> "Quotas are usually non-negotiable, applied as a uniform requirement across organisations, and are not sensitive to the existing levels or availability of suitable women."

proportions. Quotas are usually non-negotiable, applied as a uniform requirement across organisations, and are not sensitive to the existing levels or availability of suitable women. Differences in the availability of women can mean that quotas can be the most challenging and, potentially, the most likely diversity practice to produce negative reactions in areas where there are the fewest women. For example, in retail banks, it is not uncommon for women to fill 30 per cent or more of the leadership roles. In institutional banking, this is more likely to be less than 10 per cent. The risk of an across-the-board quota of, say, 40 per cent women in leadership roles may be rejected as unreasonable in institutional banking or lead to the adoption of strategies to sabotage the effectiveness of women recruited into the area.

Quotas for women's parliamentary representation are widespread. Quotas for women's representation in senior leadership roles in organisations are far less common. The experiences of those few countries that have legislated for mandatory quotas for women on boards demonstrate that the practice does increase the number of women on boards, but it also generates negative reactions, in large part due to a lack of endorsement by the business community.

"As a consequence of the negative reaction, the debate about the efficacy of quotas appears to have stalled. Targets are also opposed on the grounds that they are anti-meritocratic, although less frequently and less strongly than quotas."

In those countries where the debate about gender diversity is active, the reactions to legislated quotas for women on boards have led to polarised views about the best strategy for achieving more rapid gender balance in the upper echelons of organisations. While there is often consensus about the value of gender diversity and about the inadequacy of current practices to bring it about, there is strong disagreement about the desirability of externally imposed, legislated approaches, such as quotas, which are often seen as undermining the principle of merit in selection, promotion and reward decisions. As a result of the negative reaction, the debate about the efficacy of quotas appears to have stalled. Targets are also opposed on the grounds that they are anti-meritocratic, although less frequently and less strongly than quotas.[4]

While debates in many countries about quotas have been often heated and polarising, several European countries have either recently passed gender quota legislation, or are in the process of doing so. In 2003, Norway was the first country to pass legislation mandating quotas requiring 40:40:20 representation for women on listed company boards. Other countries introducing quotas for publicly listed companies include Spain, France, Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands. Most of these laws set a target of 40 per cent women, and while the sanctions for non-compliance vary, all apply that quota only to board-level positions, and only to publicly listed and public companies. There are quotas for women's political representation in an estimated 50 per cent of countries globally.

A government disclosure and compliance requirement in the quota legislation has provided publicly available data on the Norway experience of quotas. Key insights from analyses of this data include:

- The quota of at least 40 per cent female board representation for listed companies was met in the required timeframe, with women's board representation increasing from just seven per cent before the legislation to 40.3 per cent in 2010.
- A significant number of listed companies chose to de-list from the stock exchange, or register in other countries in order to avoid the reach of the legislation.
- Rather than the pool of female directors increasing as a result of the quotas, the number of directorships held per woman director doubled, the so-called 'golden skirt' phenomenon.[5]
- The hoped-for trickle-down benefit to gender diversity at lower levels in organisations has not yet occurred. Women's executive committee representation remains at just 12 per cent, two per cent of CEOs of Norwegian listed companies are women, and five per cent of listed company board chairs are held by women.
- In private companies not covered by the legislation, directorships held by women remains at 17 per cent, a figure comparable to the numbers for other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations that do not have legislated quotas.[6]
- Female directors were up to eight years younger and had less CEO and executive experience, but had higher levels of education compared to their male counterparts.
- There was between a two and five per cent reduction in company stock value following the introduction of the legislation, which was not evident once director's age and experience was controlled for, suggesting that it was not so much gender as a lack of board experience that contributed to the reduced market reaction.[7]
- Announcements of female board appointments were accompanied by a small increase in stock values.[8]

Beyond the Norway experience, the available evidence for the effects of quotas on company performance and market value, although limited, does not support the argument that company performance will drop when women are added to boards or that there is a sustained drop in market value. At the same time, the evidence does not show that quotas for female membership of boards will lead to improved performance or market value.

"…it seems that quotas for women in organisations are successful in increasing the numbers of women in targeted roles and do not have a significant or lasting effect on organisation performance, but they evoke strong negative reactions from many, if not most, stakeholders."

As many analysts point out, market value is a highly volatile perceptual metric that reflects the beliefs of investors more than a company's actual performance. Therefore, while there are announcement effects for events such as board appointments, be they male or female, these effects on market value will be

replaced over time by effects due to the company's performance. In that regard, no negative effect has been observed in Norway and studies in other countries report small, mixed effects. A small body of studies on the effects of increased diversity in the US, UK, the Netherlands and Denmark report positive, negative and no effect at all on company performance.[9]

Quite aside from the economic and financial outcomes for companies, there is evidence that quotas have negative impacts on the performance and workplace experiences of women who are selected as a result of a preferential or quota-based practice. Much of this evidence comes from the study of affirmative action practices, most notably in the United States. The overarching finding is that the more prescriptive and less discretionary the recruitment practice, the more negative employees' attitudes toward them. This is especially so for people who are not beneficiaries[10], but women who are hired under these practices express similar attitudes and also feel the effects of others' negative attitudes. Robust evidence suggests that women whose selection is seen to be non-merit-based are viewed as less competent, less likeable, less legitimate and deserving of lower levels of remuneration compared to their female or male colleagues who are believed to have been selected under a merit-based system.[11] Finally, women themselves internalise these appraisals, resulting in a performance-impairing, self-fulfilling prophecy.[12]

"In order to have teeth, diversity targets need to be specific, challenging, accompanied by mechanisms for accountability and reward, aligned with a corporate-level diversity strategy, and assigned at the same levels as targets for budgets and performance."

In summary, it seems that quotas for women in organisations are successful in increasing the numbers of women in targeted roles and do not have a significant or lasting effect on organisation performance, but they evoke strong negative reactions from many, if not most, stakeholders. It is difficult to mount a compelling argument for mandated quotas in organisations until there is a greater level of cultural acceptance. This still leaves the question: What is the best strategy to achieve greater levels of gender diversity in senior management in a timely way?

We argue that gender diversity targets can be made to work more effectively without the less desirable side effects of mandated quotas, provided certain conditions are met. In the next section, we outline our case for 'targets with teeth'.

Targets with teeth

In order to have teeth, diversity targets need to be specific, challenging, accompanied by mechanisms for accountability and reward, aligned with a corporate-level diversity strategy, and assigned at the same levels as targets for budgets and performance. Properly implemented, and with the right support and enablers, diversity targets with teeth can be an effective pull strategy for increasing the number of female leaders in organisations.

There are four reasons for expecting diversity targets to both gain greater acceptance than quotas and improve female representation in senior leadership roles:

- The evidence that specific, challenging goals, which are targets in all but name, are highly effective[13];
- The fact that targets are more easily adapted to local conditions than quotas and therefore less likely to provoke resistance;
- The widespread experiences of managers with targets or goals in other areas of their work, including performance, sales, and budgets; and
- The fact that targets set and accepted by managers represent a voluntary commitment to gender diversity, which has been shown to increase gender diversity and performance.[14]

However, to be effective drivers of diversity, targets must have teeth and be supported by the right enablers to ensure commitment to achieving them.

The positive effect of goal-setting on performance is one of the most robust and replicable findings in the history of management research. That is, specific challenging goals – with feedback on performance and accountability, and rewards for achievement – are the best drivers of behavioural change and performance in many aspects of management activity.[15] Specific goals that spell out what is to be achieved and by when – targets – have a much more pronounced effect on performance than goals that are vague, general and not deadline-dependent.[16] Similarly, challenging (or stretch) goals produce greater performance effects than more easily achieved goals.[17] The beneficial effects of particular types of goals on performance have been demonstrated across a wide range of tasks, cultures, and organisational and education settings, in both laboratory and field-based studies, in people from a range of cultural, ethnic, educational and age backgrounds.

"For many managers in larger organisations, gender diversity targets are no longer a totally novel task. While the lack of public reporting makes it difficult to assess their prevalence or form, it appears that gender diversity targets are becoming more common in large organisations."

Targets are less prescriptive than quotas and allow those setting the targets to consider local circumstances in establishing challenging but achievable goals for increasing women's representation in senior roles. The level of targets may vary across industries, companies and units within companies to take into account existing levels of diversity and opportunities for recruiting more women. The means of achieving and reporting targets, and the consequences for failing to achieve them, can also be determined by organisations so as to fit with existing performance management processes. In this sense, targets are a more flexible and dynamic strategy than quotas.

Specific, challenging goals are a routine part of most managers' jobs. Managers set, strive to achieve and are held accountable for specific, challenging goals in areas as diverse as sales, costs, performance, profitability, quality, attendance and project deadlines. Setting goals is an integral part of many planning and management processes, including sales planning, budgeting, project planning and performance appraisal. In each of these areas, managers are often tasked

TABLE 1
SAMPLE OF ORGANISATIONS WITH GENDER DIVERSITY TARGETS.

Company	Practice	Goal	Date by	Applied to	Outcomes
Deutsche Telecom	Quota	30%	2015	Upper and middle management	• Since the quota was introduced, the number of women company-wide has increased from 19 per cent to 23 per cent. • Deutsche Telecom recruited a number of women for top positions and important development programs.
Ernst & Young (Australia)	Target	Double 1996 number	2013	Senior management	• Since the initiative commenced in 1996, the representation of women at senior level has more than doubled from seven per cent to 15 per cent. • The promotion rate for women at partner level has more than doubled from 12 per cent to 25 per cent.
Louis Vuitton	Target	30%	2015	Senior management	• Not available.
Merck	Target	40%	2020	Upper and middle management	• Women currently make up 22 per cent of senior management positions.
Qantas	Target	45%	2014	Executive level	• The current standing is 41 per cent. • Women accounted for 46 per cent of all new hires across the business – up four per cent from 42 per cent during the 2009–10 reporting year.
Rio Tinto	Target	20%	2015	Senior management	• Women represented 14 per cent of senior management in 2010.
Rio Tinto	Target	40%	2015	Graduate level	• Women represented 27 per cent of 2010 graduate recruits.
SAP	Target	25%	2017	Management level	• Numbers have stayed relatively flat so far, at 17.8 per cent in 2010 compared to 17.7 per cent in 2009.
Sodexo	Target	23–25%	2015	Senior management (Group 1)	• Women's representation has increased from 16 per cent to 18 per cent among the top 250 executives and from 22 per cent to 23 per cent in senior management. • The proportion of women in middle management roles at Sodexo, including Sodexo Prestige, has risen from 40 to 47 per cent in just two years.
Telstra Corporation	Target	30%	2013	Board (non-executive level)	• Women now make up 31 per cent of the senior management team. • Female representation for 30 June 2012 was at 32 per cent (Telstra) and 25 per cent (Executive Management).
Woolworths	Target	33%	2015	Executive level	• In the 2003–04 financial year, 16.7 per cent of leadership roles in Woolworths Limited were held by women. • By the 2008–09 year, this number had risen to 27 per cent.

with performance improvement goals that require innovation and the discovery of new strategies. Often, challenges that require innovative responses are initially met with an 'either/or' reaction, as was the case, for example, when quality goals were first introduced alongside productivity goals. With experience and support in discovering innovative strategies, managers learn that joint outcomes are possible, as they did with quality and productivity.

For many managers in larger organisations, gender diversity targets are no longer a novel task. While the lack of public reporting makes it difficult to assess their prevalence or form, gender diversity targets appear to be becoming more common in large organisations. A survey of organisations' websites reveals that many publicly espouse, and report their progress against, a range of diversity practices, including flexible work arrangements, extended parental leave, opportunity enhancement, anti-discrimination and harassment measures, and gender diversity targets. Table 1 shows a sample of these organisations. There are undoubtedly many other companies that use targets but do not publicise the practice. However, it is difficult to ascertain how effective gender diversity targets have been in these organisations, because they are not obliged to report their performance against them. It is also difficult to estimate the targets' potential, because there are to date no reported studies of the effects of using gender diversity targets.

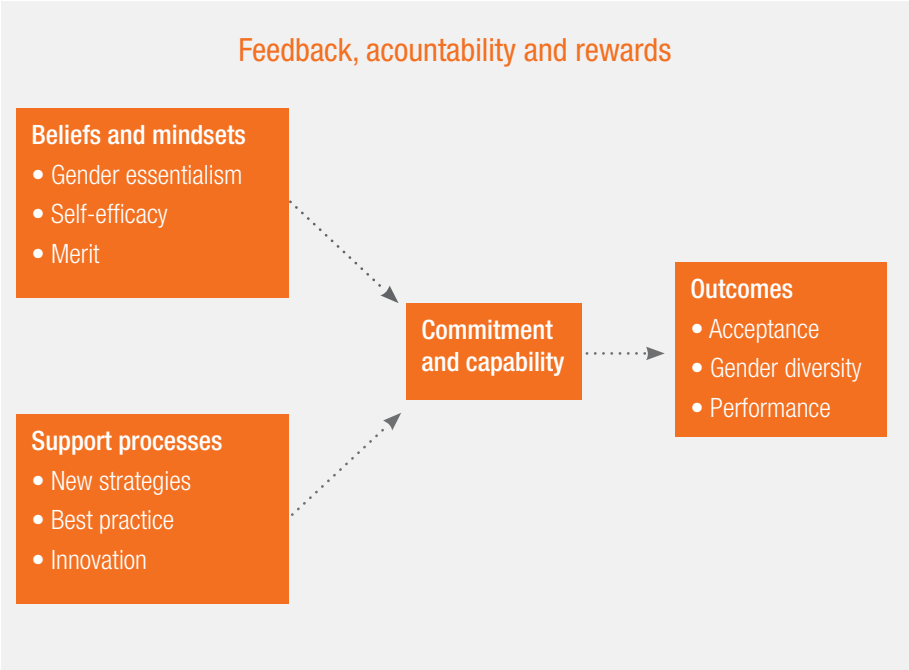
A fourth reason for setting gender diversity targets voluntarily is the emerging evidence that companies that adopt diversity practices voluntarily, and are active and engaged in managing diversity, have better performance outcomes.[18] Having managers set diversity targets and assume responsibility for their achievements balances voluntary engagement with the challenge of increasing gender diversity.

Making targets work

Given the extensive evidence for the positive performance effects of specific, challenging, time-bound goals, and their widespread use in most areas of organisational performance, their application to the goal of increased gender diversity should reap similar performance benefits. However, this begs a question: Why haven't gender diversity targets been employed in this way to greater effect? A closer reading of the literature on the relationships between goals, strategies and performance suggests that there are two key conditions that are elemental in goals' ability to act as drivers of performance. These two conditions are: acceptance and commitment to the goal; and the capability – that is, strategies and skills – required to achieve the goal. Figure 1 illustrates a framework for the effective use of targets to achieve greater gender diversity.

"Arguably, the goal of increasing the number and proportion of women in senior leadership roles is not universally accepted and endorsed. Views about the abilities of women, the demands of managerial roles, and stereotypes about women's and men's capabilities are obstacles to greater levels of managerial commitment to gender diversity."

FIGURE 1
FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING TARGETS WITH TEETH



To be as effective as possible, challenging goals must be accepted by the person to whom they have been assigned. This person must remain committed to the goal of increasing gender diversity throughout the obstacles and difficulties they might encounter on the way to achieving it.[19] Arguably, the goal of increasing the number and proportion of women in senior leadership roles is not universally accepted and endorsed. Views about the abilities of women, the demands of managerial roles, and stereotypes about women's and men's capabilities are obstacles to greater levels of managerial commitment to gender diversity. As Figure 1 shows, a number of factors influence the degree to which managers accept and commit to gender diversity goals. These can be grouped around beliefs and mindsets, and organisational systems and processes that generate more effective strategies.

Beliefs and mindsets about gender diversity targets

There are three sets of beliefs, or mindsets, that affect people's level of commitment to gender equality as a goal. These are:

- Gender-essentialist beliefs, that is, beliefs in the existence of natural, biologically ingrained, unalterable differences between men and women;
- Self-efficacy beliefs, or the confidence a person has in their ability to carry out a task; and
- The assumption that meritocracy and equality are incompatible.

The first set of beliefs that plays a role in levels of managerial commitment to gender diversity goals is gender essentialism. People who have strong gender-essentialist beliefs tend to believe that perceived differences between men and women are deeply ingrained, biologically determined and unalterable. These beliefs also entail the view that men's and women's brains are fundamentally different and suited to different types of work.[20] Gender-essentialist beliefs also underlie and reinforce people's stereotypes about men's and women's characteristics, behaviours and abilities. They are strong predictors of people's reactions to gender diversity, and degree of support for targets. People who believe strongly in gender essentialism are more likely to believe that society treats men and women fairly, given their apparently innate differences in capability. As a result, they are less likely to support increased diversity and, by extension, less likely to support strategies for achieving it.

The counter-view to gender essentialism beliefs is that perceived differences between men and women in leadership behaviours, for example, are the product of socialisation, learning and opportunity, rather than being innate and fixed. People who espouse this view are more likely to believe that women possess the same potential capabilities as men, and that there are no natural barriers to their advancement.

The second set of beliefs – self-efficacy – relates to the extent of managers' commitment to diversity goals. Self-efficacy is the extent to which a person has confidence in their ability to achieve a goal or target and is an important factor in managers' levels of commitment to particular goals.[21] The stronger managers' beliefs in self-efficacy, the more likely they are to accept a goal and remain committed to it through obstacles and setbacks. While targets are used to motivate performance in a range of business activities, targets for gender diversity constitute an unfamiliar and complex task for many mangers, which poses a challenge to their confidence in achieving them. Managers' self-efficacy for achieving challenging diversity targets can be bolstered by encouraging creativity, investing in skills development, and establishing recruitment and promotion systems and practices that support these endeavours.

"The counter-view to gender essentialism beliefs is that the observed differences between men and women in leadership behaviours for example, are the product of socialisation, learning and opportunity, rather than innate and fixed."

The third set of beliefs that influences commitment to gender diversity targets concerns people's views about merit. The view that gender equality strategies such as targets and quotas undermine meritocracy is passionately held by many people, including many women. This view underlies much of the psychological and attitudinal backlash toward women who are hired under such prescriptive practices, as described earlier, and is often accompanied by the tacit assumption that if there were sufficient numbers of qualified women, they would already be selected without the need for targets or quotas.

The view that organisations can either promote more women or recruit based on merit misconstrues the way meritocracies operate. Under a merit system, to select the most capable candidate, the entire pool of available talent must be considered and have equal access to opportunities for advancement, and selection processes must be blind to all considerations other than job-related capabilities. Few people would argue that the playing field is truly level for women seeking promotion to leadership roles, and research on bias in decision-making, both conscious and unconscious, has shown this is virtually impossible to achieve. Thus, selection processes that most people currently assume to be merit-based are in fact not very meritocratic.

Overcoming the obstacles created by gender essentialism, self-efficacy beliefs and the 'merit or more women' mindset will often require organisational culture and attitude changes, and innovation in search, selection, remuneration and development processes. The prevailing culture in an organisation must encourage everyone to adopt alternatives to these views to secure managers' commitment to gender diversity targets. This will require serious attention to education, training and development, and culture change, and persuasive communication by leaders to supplant unhelpful beliefs with mindsets that are more conducive to the acceptance of diversity goals. Misplaced confidence in the meritocracy of current selection processes might be countered with the mindset 'merit and more women', rather than 'merit or more women'. This change might encourage managers to engage in more creative talent search strategies, and to innovate around flexible work or team-based work design to realise the goal of increasing the number of women without selecting less capable women.

Systems and processes for gender diversity targets

Organisational systems and processes make up the second set of factors crucial in determining managers' levels of commitment to gender diversity goals. These systems and process can work to enhance or constrain the effect of targets for women in senior positions. While managers are familiar with targets in other areas of endeavour, such as finance, budgets and productivity, gender diversity targets represent an unfamiliar and complex task. Managers who lack the ability to innovate and develop new, effective strategies to achieve gender targets tend to fall back on old ways of doing things, and when these prove ineffective their commitment to gender diversity goals reduces. This is a greater risk when reward and recognition is contingent on adhering to systems and processes that discourage, rather than encourage, new strategy development.

> "The systems and processes that influence and channel behaviour in organisations must operate to encourage innovation and new strategy development for increasing gender diversity."

The systems and processes that influence and channel behaviour in organisations must encourage innovation and new strategy development for increasing gender diversity. Training, promotion, recognition and remuneration processes must support innovation. Audits of selection, promotion, reward, task allocation, scheduling, competency frameworks and role design can enlighten managers' decision-making as they develop systems that encourage progress towards diversity goals. Hand in hand with this process, organisations must think beyond the traditional assumptions that often hamper organisational change. For example, assumptions that clients expect 24x7 availability, that face-time and long work hours are the best measures of productivity, and that taking advantage of flexible work arrangements is an indicator of low commitment or lack of ambition.

A second important organisational consideration in maximising the effectiveness of gender targets is the kinds of roles and levels to which targets are applied. Research on women's resilience in male-dominated work environments[22], and the fact that management in most organisations remains male-dominated, suggests that a crucial factor fostering women's performance and wellbeing at work is the number of women in their immediate area, or in their specific role. Thus, targets need to be designed and calibrated to create critical masses of women in particular work teams, units or roles, rather than a proportion of women organisation-wide, which can provide a picture of overall gender balance, but pockets of extreme imbalance. For example, a large number of women in clerical or administrative roles, but very few in senior management roles, does not deliver the benefits that a gender-balanced workplace can deliver.

"Performance and remuneration process need to place a greater emphasis on the value of diversity targets in order to motivate managers to give diversity a more central place in their performance planning."

Finally, feedback and accountability are of utmost importance to managers, acceptance and commitment to gender diversity targets. There must be a clear path to progress towards gender diversity goals, both for managers and for organisations. Improvements in the number of women appointed to company boards in countries like Australia have been in response to public reporting and accountability requirements imposed by regulatory bodies. Targets need feedback to motivate effective behavioural change.[23] The same might be said in organisations where managers who are accountable for their progress, and required to report on it, will arguably exert greater effort in their achievement. Performance and remuneration processes need to place a greater emphasis on the value of diversity targets to motivate managers to give diversity a more central place in their performance planning.

Conclusions: Managing gender diversity targets for maximum impact

While in some respects women's advancement in the corporate world has substantially improved in recent decades, progress towards gender balance in other areas has been frustratingly slow, particularly in terms of the number of women at executive committee and board levels. Some countries have legislated for mandatory gender quotas in order to address the slow rate of change. In other countries, many organisations have voluntarily adopted targets for women in senior roles. While it is difficult to assess the relative efficacy of quotas compared to targets, it is evident that mandatory approaches such as quotas bring a range of undesirable effects, such as regulatory costs, administrative burdens, efforts to avoid compliance and negative perceptions of the women hired. Gender diversity targets with teeth – that is, goals that are specific, challenging, embedded in organisational processes for reward, feedback and accountability – can accelerate the rate of progress towards gender equality in the senior ranks of organisations.

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3. The financial impact of welfare, tax and childcare arrangements

Professor Peter Whiteford

This chapter examines the existing tax arrangements and family benefit arrangements in place and the impact these have on the female participation rate.

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Since the late 1970s, women's labour force participation has increased significantly, with the gap between the participation rates of men and women falling by nearly two-thirds, from 36 percentage points to 13 percentage points.[1]

However, as shown in Figure 1, the gap remains widest for women aged between 25 and 34 at nearly 18 percentage points, and declines for older women before increasing again for those aged 55 and over. The most likely explanation for the greater gap for women between 24 and 34 is that this age range covers the period between when most women have their first child and when the child begins preschool.

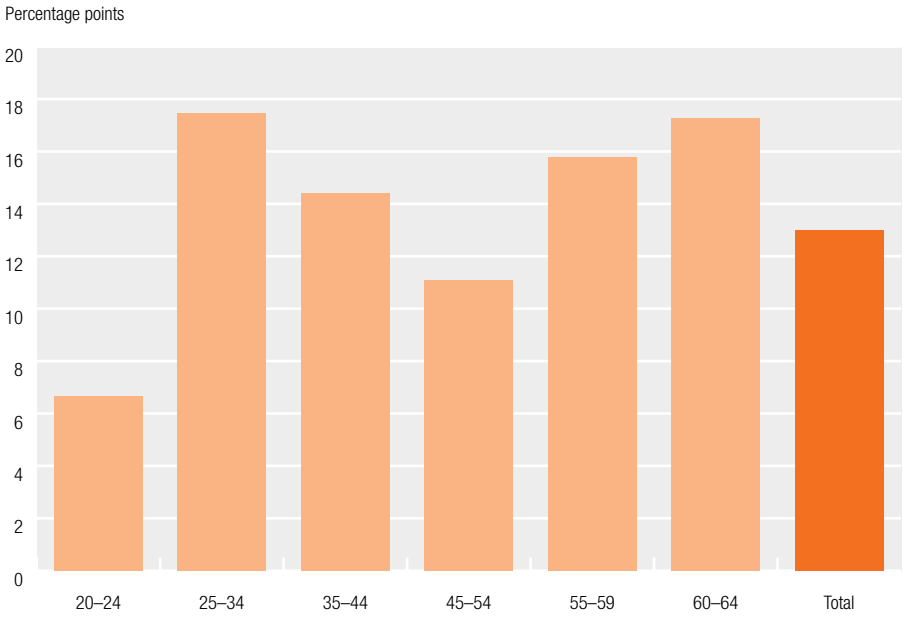
This interpretation is supported by other ABS surveys. In 2009–10, in couple families with dependent children, 66 per cent of the mothers were employed compared to 59 per cent in 1997. In single mother families with dependent children, 60 per cent of the mothers were employed in 2009–10, compared to 46 per cent in 1997.

However, the increased employment rates were more marked in families with older children. In couple families where the youngest child was a dependent student aged 15–24 years, 81 per cent of the mothers were employed in 2009–10. Among similar single mothers, 83 per cent were employed in 2009–10.

In contrast, in families where the youngest dependent child was aged four or under, mothers in couple families were more likely to be employed (51 per cent) than single mothers with young children (28 per cent). Employed single mothers with dependent children were more likely to work full-time (54 per cent) than employed mothers of dependent children in couple families (42 per cent).

FIGURE 1

DIFFERENCE IN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MEN AND WOMEN BY AGE, 2013



Source: ABS Cat No. 6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery

According to the Grattan Institute[2], removing disincentives for women to enter the paid workforce would increase the size of the Australian economy by about $25 billion per year. The institute argues that the most important policy change is to alter access to Family Tax Benefit and Childcare Benefit and Rebate incentives, so that the second income earner in a family — usually, but not always, a mother — takes home more income after tax, welfare and childcare costs. In particular, the institute argues that:

> *"These barriers could be substantially reduced by treating Family Tax Benefit as income in the hands of the family's first wage earner, and treating childcare as a deduction in calculating tax and eligibility for welfare benefits. However, more work is required to identify tax and welfare changes that would reduce barriers at an acceptable cost to the budget, after taking into account increased income tax collection as a result of higher participation."*[3]

Family payments and assistance with childcare

To assess specific options, it is important to identify how existing welfare, tax and childcare arrangements affect financial returns to work.

The Australian income tax system is nominally based on individual income, with a progressive rate scale with a zero rate on taxable income up to $18,200 per year, a 19 per cent rate up to $37,000 per year, 32.5 per cent to $80,000, 37 per cent between $80,000 and $180,000, and 45 per cent over $180,000 per year.

Relative to other rich countries, Australia has a generous system of income-tested cash assistance for low- and middle-income families with children.[4] Family Tax Benefit Part A (FTBA) is paid at a maximum rate of $169 per fortnight for each child aged up to 12 years old and $221 per fortnight for children aged between 13 and 18. The FTBA payment is worked out using two income tests. The first test reduces the maximum rate of FTBA by 20 cents for each dollar above joint family income of $47,815 until payment reaches the base rate payable (currently $54.32 per fortnight). The second test reduces the base rate of FTBA by 30 cents for each dollar above joint family income of $94,316 (plus $3796 for each Family Tax Benefit–eligible child after the first) until the payment reaches nil.

Family Tax Benefit Part B (FTBB) does not vary with the number of children, but those with at least one child under five receive a payment of $144.34 per fortnight, while those with a youngest child aged between five and 18 receive a payment of $100.66 per fortnight. This benefit is for families (single parent or couple) in which the primary earner has an adjusted taxable income of $150,000 or less per year. In two-parent families, if the primary earner's income is at or below this limit, FTBB will also be assessed on the basis of the second earner's income. Secondary earners can earn up to $5037 each year before it affects the rate of FTBB. Payments are reduced by 20 cents for each dollar of income earned over $5037. This gives cut-out points of $25,623 a year, if the youngest child is under five years of age, or $19,929 a year, if the youngest child is between five and 18.

Childcare costs vary across states, but they generally range between $70 a day and a little more than $80 per day for those using multiple days of care, so that full-time care for five days would cost between $350 and $400 per week.

The Child Care Benefit (CCB) reduces the cost of childcare fees. Currently, the maximum amount for one child below school age using 50 hours of care per week is $195 per week ($3.90 per hour). In addition, the Child Care Rebate covers 50 per cent of out-of-pocket costs up to an annual cap of $7500 per child per year. The maximum amount of CCB is payable up to joint family incomes of $41,026 per year, and is reduced by 10 cents in the dollar above this level, so that for a family with one child in care, no CCB is payable above an annual income of $142,426.

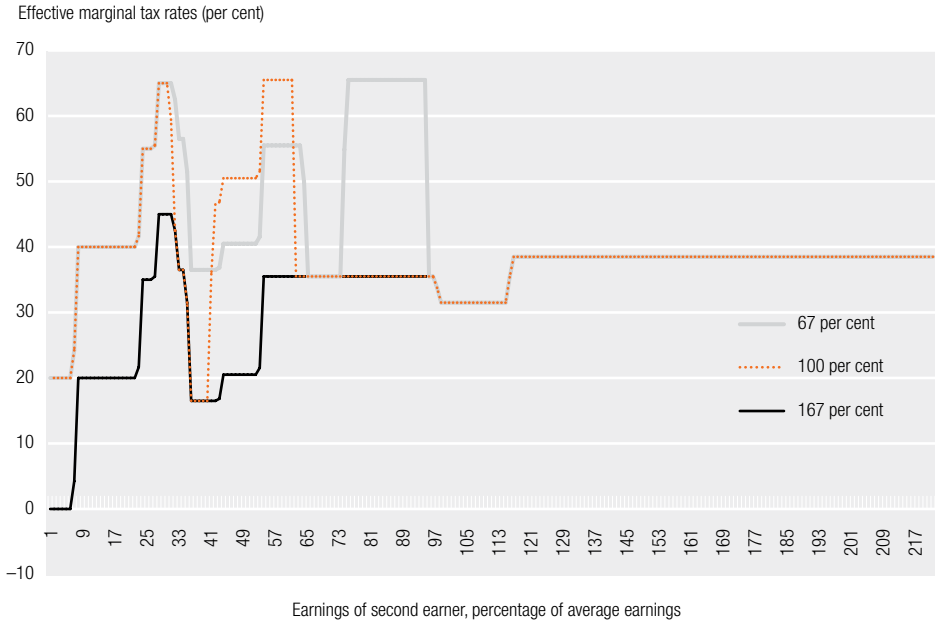
The use of joint family income as the basis of assessing entitlements to FTBA and CCB, plus the payment of FTBB primarily to single earner families, means that the tax-transfer system as a whole is not individually based, but is for a significant proportion of families with children a family-based system.

"…more work is required to identify tax and welfare changes that would reduce barriers at an acceptable cost to the budget, after taking into account increased income tax collection as a result of higher participation."

The progressive personal income tax system, combined with the withdrawal of family assistance, gives rise to high effective marginal tax rates. Figure 2 illustrates the pattern of effective tax rates in 2011 using calculations from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) tax-benefit models. The calculations show the pattern of marginal rates for a second earner according to different levels of earnings of the first earner.

FIGURE 2

EFFECTIVE MARGINAL TAX RATES FOR SECOND EARNERS, BY LEVEL OF EARNINGS OF PARTNER, AUSTRALIA, 2011



Source: Calculated from OECD tax benefit models, http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/benefitsandwagescountryspecificinformation.htm.

Note: Effective marginal tax rates include the combined impact of income tax rates, the Medicare levy and the withdrawal of FTBA and FTBB, but do not include the effects of childcare costs. The earnings of the second earner vary between zero and 220 per cent of the average wage ($69,900 in 2011), while the first earner is assumed to earn either 67 per cent ($45,500), 100 per cent or 167 per cent ($116,700) of the average wage.

The income-testing of FTB Part B on the second earner's income means that rather than having a tax threshold of $18,200 per year a second earner has effectively a tax threshold of:

- Only $5000 a year before she faces a marginal tax rate of 20 per cent; and
- Then when her earnings go over $18,200, she faces an effective tax rate of up to 39 per cent instead of the 19 per cent other earners face.

Depending on the earnings of the first worker, effective marginal tax rates can be even higher. If the first earner is close to the threshold for reduction of FTBA, the second earner's income can lead to simultaneous reductions in both FTBA and FTBB to give a combined withdrawal rate of 40 per cent for joint family incomes between $48,000 and $70,000 for a family with one child, rising to 59 per cent when the second earner starts to pay income tax as well. The phasing-in of the Medicare levy also increases effective tax rates, although over a narrow income range.

If the combined income of two parents means they earn the lower rate of FTBA, their effective tax rate can exceed 60 per cent as family benefits are reduced by 30 per cent and the second earner faces a marginal tax rate of 32.5 per cent.

These calculations do not include childcare costs, which further reduce returns from paid employment. For a woman earning the average wage, gross childcare

costs could amount to 60 per cent of her total income, and an even higher percentage for those earning a lower wage. The CCB and Child Care Rebate reduce these costs significantly, but even so, net childcare costs can range between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of gross earnings for women earning up to the average wage and paying for full day care for two children. For higher-paid women, net childcare costs are higher in dollar terms, but lower as a share of gross income or disposable income.

In considering policy options to encourage increased employment among mothers, it is also important to consider where employment rates are lowest, as this is likely to be where the largest gains can be achieved. As noted earlier, employment rates are much lower among single mothers than among partnered mothers. In general terms, employment rates among partnered mothers are lower among women in families in the bottom half of the family income distribution scale, as lower employment is a contributing factor to lower household incomes. However, women's earnings are also lower among families in the richest 10 per cent of families with children, compared to those whose family incomes are somewhat lower but still above the median.

The discussion above also suggests that the income testing of family payments has a larger effect on marginal tax rates than net childcare costs, as the withdrawal of family tax benefits over certain income ranges can add up to an effective tax rate of 40 per cent, while net childcare costs are generally under 20 per cent of earnings. However, reducing withdrawal rates on family tax benefits could have high budgetary costs. As noted by the Grattan Institute, consideration of policy options in this area should involve careful modelling of costs of alternative options and identification of winners and losers.

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4. The barriers to equality of opportunity in the workforce: The role of unconscious bias

Dr Jennifer Whelan

This chapter explores the prevalence and role that unconscious bias has in restricting the progress of women in the workplace.

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Jennifer is currently a Research Fellow at the Asia Pacific Social Impact Leadership Centre. Her research work focuses on developing innovative basic and applied research programs to address prejudice, stereotyping, bias and social inequality. Her current work examines the myths around meritocracy, the paradoxical discriminatory effects of merit-based organisational practices, and over-coming obstacles to employment for marginalised populations, in particular, people with disability. Jennifer is also director of Psynapse Psychometrics, an unconscious bias assessment and development diagnostics provider working with large organisations on unconscious bias and competence.

Introduction

Over the last decade, and particularly in the last few years, the language of diversity and inclusion has become common in the corporate world. Organisations increasingly devote significant time and resources to strategies and practices aimed at increasing the workforce representation of diverse groups, particularly women and ethnic minorities. Coupled with legislative and regulatory interventions aimed at eliminating discrimination, organisational efforts have had some success in creating workplaces that better reflect the diverse societies in which they operate. In Australia, the growth in investment in gender diversity initiatives is, at least in part, in response to the Australian Securities Exchange's (ASX's) recently introduced requirement for all listed companies to report on diversity in their organisations. An independent report[1] released in September 2012 showed a high level of compliance with the ASX requirement, with 98 per cent of listed companies establishing a diversity policy or explaining why not, and 60 per cent

reporting they had established measurable objectives, such as gender targets, for achieving their diversity goals.

Nonetheless, the slow rate at which workplace gender equality has improved remains frustrating for many. Cultural change is a complex process, and achieving gender balance in organisations requires organisations to change the way they operate, and individuals to change the way they think and behave. Anecdotally, many organisations have observed that despite substantial investments in training and development, and changes in organisational practices and procedures, gaining traction on gender diversity remains frustratingly difficult. Unconscious bias is a key reason for this.

What is unconscious bias?

Once explored only in social psychological academic domains, unconscious bias has become a mainstream concern in corporate diversity and inclusion work. While many organisations recognise unconscious bias as an obstacle to their diversity and inclusion goals, the underlying mechanisms of unconscious bias, and why it affects gender equality, are less well understood by organisations. To understand the implications of unconscious bias in organisational settings, it is necessary to examine unconscious cognition more generally, since the majority of unconscious thinking is not biased.

Conscious and unconscious knowledge

Cognitive science and social psychological research over the last 20 years has generally accepted a 'dual process' view of thinking processes.[3] This perspective distinguishes between two fundamentally different thinking processes: propositional and associative. These map to conscious and unconscious thinking, respectively. Propositional, or conscious, thinking processes are what we generally mean by deliberative, effortful thinking based on the acquisition of information, governed by logic and reasoning.

Associative processes, on the other hand, are what is meant when we talk about unconscious cognition. Unconscious knowledge is represented in the brain as concepts between which relationships, or associations, have been formed by exposure and observation. The strength of these associations is determined by how often, how intensely, and in what context we observe particular concepts together.

Over time, as a result of our life experiences and the people and ideas we have been exposed to, we develop an incredibly complex network of associations between concepts. For example, someone who grew up in a household where only men worked outside the home, and only women worked inside the home, would likely have developed stronger associations between women and domesticity, rather than men and domesticity, regardless of whether they hold this view consciously.

When particular associations are activated repeatedly over time, they become stronger. As they become stronger, they require less cognitive effort to be activated and, consequently, they become automatic and unconscious.

Thinking processes are unconscious in that they occur outside of our conscious awareness and they occur automatically, that is, they require little attention or effort, and they can be difficult to stop or override. Unconscious thinking is often referred to as 'autopilot' or fast thinking for this reason.

There are very good reasons why so much of our thinking becomes unconscious. Unconscious thinking requires very little cognitive effort. This means we can process more information more rapidly unconsciously than we can consciously. Our ability to delegate much of our thinking to autopilot makes us incredibly efficient thinkers.

"Because unconscious thinking is extremely fast and is not based on logic or reasoning, it is not 'fact-checked'. This means people can persist in unconscious thinking that is not congruent with external realities, and may even be discrepant from their conscious thinking."

How does bias arise?

Unconscious cognition is highly efficient and adaptive – it enables us to take in larger amounts of information more rapidly. Most of the time, unconscious thinking is also extremely accurate. However, there are some risks associated with 'outsourcing' so much of our thinking to unconscious processes. While it is true that some biases are conscious, there are three key features of unconscious cognition that make it more susceptible to flaws and inaccuracies when compared to conscious thinking.[4]

1. Unconscious thinking is a pattern-recognition system that processes events, objects and concepts that tend to co-occur. Pattern recognition systems are inherently stable – a pattern of associations will not be altered until a critical mass of contradictory information is observed. Consequently, patterns of unconscious associations are not updated very often and can contain out-of-date information.

2. Because unconscious thinking is extremely fast and is not based on logic or reasoning, it is not fact-checked. This means people can persist in unconscious thinking that is not congruent with external realities, and may even have discrepancies with their conscious thinking.

3. Because unconscious thinking happens automatically and without awareness, people often do not realise the flaws or inaccuracies in their unconscious thinking. As a result, people tend not to examine their unconscious thinking in the way they update their conscious knowledge and thinking.

A bias is a systematic error or inaccuracy in our thinking, and while we can have biases in our conscious thinking too, they are far more likely to occur in our unconscious thinking, and also far less likely to be rectified.

Types of unconscious bias

Bias can emerge in a range of organisational settings and processes, in evaluations and judgements about who is more capable, about who is performing better, about what success looks like, about who 'fits' better, about who is more hireable, and so on. Unconscious bias also affects the finest of fine-grain interactions like eye contact, body language, and conversation that facilitate relationship-building and contribute to organisational culture and dynamics.

There are many well-documented cognitive biases, both conscious and unconscious. However, when it comes to interpersonal behaviour, many of our unconscious biases are manifested in the form of stereotypes.

Stereotypes and bias

Stereotypes are shared beliefs held by one group of people about another group of people. More generally, stereotypes are widely known, but oversimplified, descriptions of people from particular social or demographic groups. Although most groups have some degree of associated stereotypical description with which most people are familiar, we are more likely to stereotype some groups than others, and gender is one category around which stereotypes are deeply ingrained.

Stereotypes are useful for a few reasons. To begin with, stereotypes are efficient – they enable us to simplify a complex social world by categorising people into groups or types, and making some assumptions about what characteristics they have on that basis. Additionally, because they are widely shared by other people, they are a very efficient way of exchanging information with other people. Finally, because stereotypes can be recognised and activated unconsciously, they can guide our thinking quickly and effortlessly.

While stereotypes do not always contain negative information, they can become problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, stereotypes are usually oversimplifications that pigeonhole people on the basis of limited information. This results in a tendency to perceive people within a stereotyped group to be more homogeneous, or similar to each other, than they really are. This in turn has the effect of making groups appear to be more fundamentally different to each other than they really are.

"…because stereotypes are a part of our unconscious knowledge and not updated or examined regularly, they can contain inaccurate information. Furthermore, because we like to have confidence in what we believe about the world, we often ignore or discount contradictory information, or we can be reluctant to recognise when our stereotypes are out-dated or inaccurate…"

Because stereotypes are a part of our unconscious knowledge they are not updated or examined regularly and thus they tend to contain inaccurate information. Furthermore, because we like to have confidence in what we believe about the world, we often ignore or discount contradictory information because we are reluctant to recognise when our stereotypes are outdated or inaccurate. This process is called 'confirmation bias', and it can create a vicious cycle that in turn makes our stereotypes stronger.

Organisational implications of unconscious bias

While unconscious thinking, stereotypes, and biases pervade every aspect of everyday life, there are a number of unconscious biases specifically related to gender in organisational contexts that have systematically negative effects on women.

Research shows that we are more likely to use unconscious thinking processes at certain times. This means that some situations are more likely than others to trigger unconscious bias and stereotypical thinking. Workplaces often provide many of the preconditions for unconscious thinking to occur: having to divide our attention across multiple tasks at once, having to make rapid judgements and decisions, and carrying out routine tasks.

There are a number of reasons why unconscious bias and stereotyping present issues for organisations. Three key phenomena present particular challenges to gender equality in organisations, both at the level of individual women's performance and opportunities, and at the level of organisational dynamics.

Think manager, think male

One of the most common manifestations of unconscious gender stereotypes in workplace contexts is the so-called 'think manager, think male' paradigm.[5] Both men and women generally consider managerial roles as stereotypically more masculine than feminine. For example, the traits most frequently used to describe leadership potential, such as strong, decisive and ambitious, are traits more readily ascribed to men than women. This means men are often seen as a better fit for leadership roles, not because of their skills and abilities, but because of their assumed personal qualities. While women hold this stereotype less commonly nowadays, it is still prevalent among men.[6]

Gender-role stereotyping such as 'think manager, think male' has negative consequences for women in organisations generally, but particularly in terms of the numbers of women in senior or leadership roles. The management competency frameworks in many organisations are still heavily weighted toward more masculine leadership traits and behaviours. Because stereotypical thinking is frequently unconscious, processes like candidate search, selection, advancement and remuneration can be unwittingly skewed against women despite equal opportunity policies and meritocratic practices. In fact, recent research suggests that the active promotion of meritocratic selection processes in organisations can have the paradoxical effect of triggering unconscious biases about women's leadership competence and result in more discriminatory selection decisions.[7] This is a conundrum for organisations seeking to raise awareness about gender bias in selection and promotion, in that raising this issue may have a detrimental outcome for women in some circumstances.

Backlash

A second process through which unconscious bias and stereotyping can have such a detrimental effect on women in organisations is a process called 'backlash'. A large body of research on stereotypes shows that people are more likely to react negatively when they encounter others who do not fit their stereotypical expectations.[8] In the case of gender, in short, people prefer women to behave like stereotypical women, and men to behave like stereotypical men. When women display traits or behaviours that are more stereotypically masculine, they are likely to be penalised and evaluated more negatively – that is, to incur a backlash. This is also true when men display stereotypically feminine traits. However, backlash affects women in organisations far more than it does men, because leadership tends to be more closely associated with masculine traits. This means that for women to show leadership competence, they must display traits that are stereotypically masculine. When they do so, they are likely to be more negatively evaluated, both by men and by other women. For example, what may be seen as decisive in a male leader is more likely to be seen as overbearing in a female leader.

Research clearly shows that while women who behave counter-stereotypically are considered equally competent as their more stereotypically feminine peers, they are seen as less likeable, less likely to be hired or promoted, and more likely to be the targets of sabotage from co-workers.[9,10,11] Women in organisations with particularly male-dominated cultures, or where more traditional masculine models of leadership are prevalent, can be faced with an impossible dilemma: if they do not behave assertively they cannot demonstrate leadership competence, but if they do behave assertively, they are considered less promotable.

"Women in organisations with particularly male-dominated cultures, or where more traditional masculine models of leadership are prevalent, can be faced with an impossible dilemma whereby if they do not behave assertively they cannot demonstrate leadership competence, but if they do behave assertively, they are considered less promotable."

While backlash effects are more likely to be experienced by women in organisations, there is one context in which backlash can negatively affect men: the area of work–life balance. Women are still far more likely than men to take extended time away from the workplace when they have children, and this contributes to the perception that flexible work is a practice specific to women. Recent research undertaken by the 100 Percent Project[12] highlights that while many men with families express an interest in greater work–life balance, they are reluctant to avail themselves of flexible work arrangements where they are offered. One key reason for this is that working flexibly is stereotypically seen to show a lack of ambition or commitment. However, another key obstacle highlighted by this research is that flexible work is more stereotypically, and unconsciously, associated with women. Men engaging in what is seen to be 'women's work' leaves them vulnerable to backlash effects, and this arguably contributes to their reluctance to take up flexible work arrangements.

Stereotype threat

Regardlesss of the extent to which stereotypical masculine characteristics are favoured in leadership positions, unconscious bias and stereotyping can lead to a phenomenon known as stereotype threat.

When we become aware of others' stereotypes about us we are more likely to conform to them and behave in accordance with others' expectations.[14] For example, research shows that women perform worse on mathematical tasks when gender stereotypes about maths competence are mentioned prior to the task. This effect is not apparent when no mention of gender differences in maths ability is made.[15] So being made aware that, by virtue of her gender, a woman should perform worse at some tasks than her male counterparts, can contribute to poorer performance. It is crucial to clarify that the cause of stereotype threat is simply awareness of the stereotype, not actual inferior competence in a task.

"When we become aware of the stereotypes about our social group we tend to become more likely to conform to them and behave in accordance with others' expectations. For example, research shows that women perform worse on mathematical tasks when gender stereotypes about maths competence are mentioned prior to the task."

Stereotype threat is, in some respects, the flipside of backlash. Because we prefer people to match our stereotypical expectations, we are similarly aware that others evaluate us more positively if we match their stereotypical expectations of us. This is more likely to occur when a given situation or context draws attention to stereotypes about women's roles. For women, this means that when attention is drawn to her gender, such as when she occupies a role considered to be stereotypically male, or when a gender-relevant comment or joke is made, she is more likely to behave in accordance with others' gender stereotypes. Because the prevailing organisational stereotype of women is that they are less competent as leaders, the performance of female leaders is likely to be impaired. The negative effects of stereotype threat in organisations are likely to be specific to women, because if attention is drawn to a man's gender and he behaves more stereotypically as a result, it is more likely to result in greater perceived leadership competence, rather than less, because leadership is considered stereotypically masculine.

Stereotype threat is also damaging to women because they internalise these appraisals, viewing themselves as less capable and less deserving when they are hired to leadership roles under equality measures such as targets or quotas.[16] This can also impair women's performance, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy, which in turn reinforces other people's stereotypes that women are less competent leaders. This effect is also the source of many women's resistance to preferential practices such as diversity targets or quotas, though it is worth pointing out that this is a perceptual phenomenon, there is no evidence that candidates hired under targets or quotas are in fact less capable.

Addressing unconscious bias

It is first crucial to acknowledge that unconscious thinking and stereotypes are part of being human. All people engage in unconscious thinking and stereotyping to some degree. Many organisations have quite rightly incorporated unconscious bias awareness into diversity training programs and strategies. However, organisations could benefit from recognising that because the behaviour change they aspire to can be constrained by factors at the level of unconscious cognition, information and awareness-raising alone are not likely to be sufficient in order to change deeply ingrained automatic thinking patterns.

Gaining greater awareness of unconscious cognitive processes is undoubtedly the first crucial step in tackling unconscious bias, but particular attention should be given to highlighting the role of unconscious bias in the three processes outlined above: 'think manager, think male', backlash and stereotype threat. Increasingly, there are commercially available tools to leverage this awareness beyond the demonstration of unconscious bias, to assessing the prevalence and dynamics of specific unconscious gender stereotypes and beliefs that act as obstacles to change.

This enables organisations to engage individuals in personal development around unconscious bias, using evidence-based strategies to identify triggers for bias, and interrupt the unconscious thinking processes that produce it. It also enables organisations to examine their systems, processes and cultural norms to ensure that they do not inadvertently reinforce unhelpful unconscious habits. Organisations that understand the unconscious dynamics of their workforce can better manage objections or resistance to flexible work arrangements, gender targets, and other gender equality initiatives, which are often based on stereotypes and unconscious thinking.

The role of support and networking initiatives for women should also be highlighted, since women's experiences in organisations are highly likely to be shaped by the products of unconscious thinking, whether it be as a result of others' stereotypes and biases, or as a result of the self-handicapping effects of their own unconscious gender biases and beliefs.

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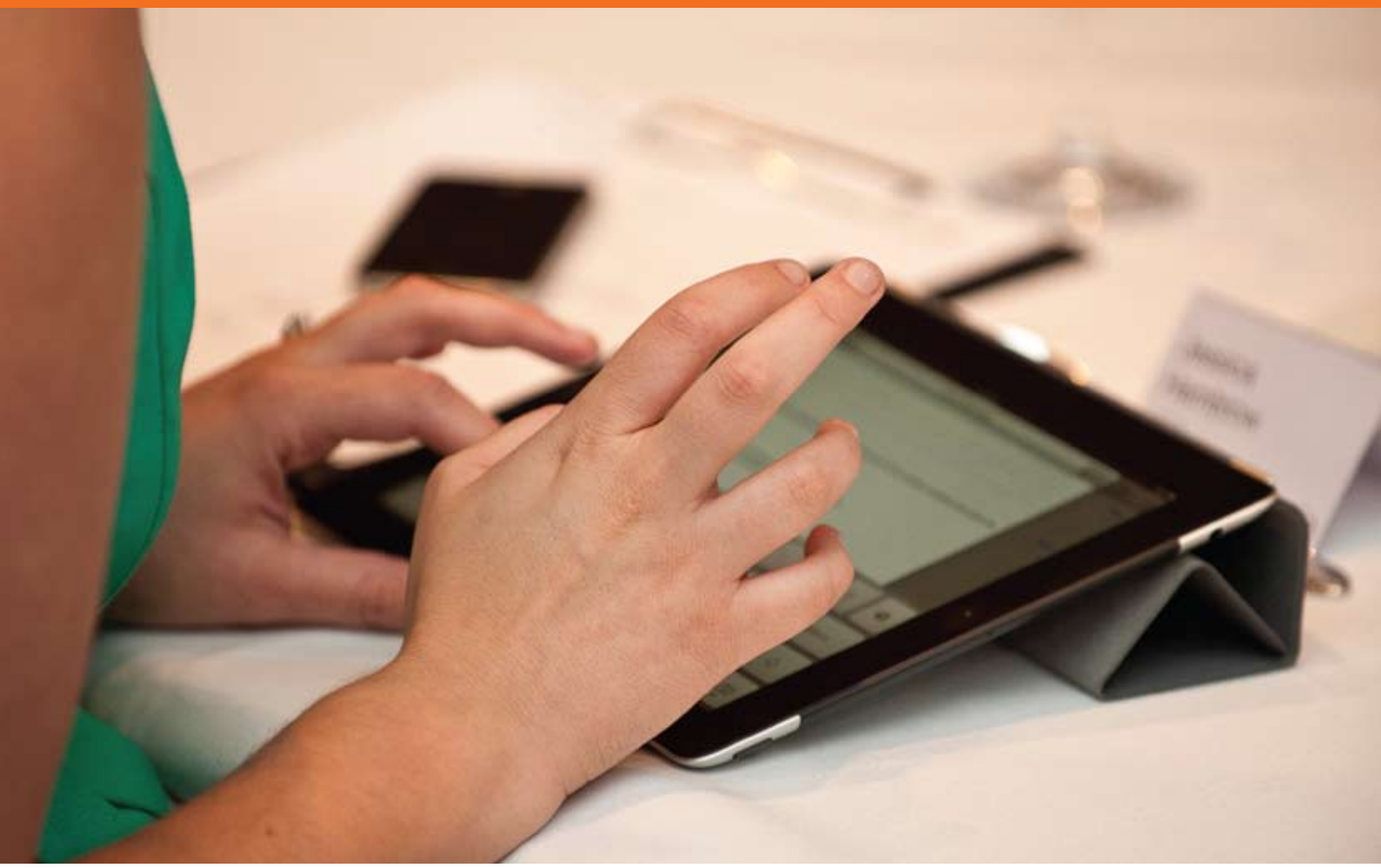

5. The young and the restless: Gen Y and the 21st century barriers to women in leadership

Holly Ransom

This chapter provides a Gen Y perspective of the career progression barriers for young women in the workplace.

Named as one of the "100 Most Influential Australian Women" by the Australian Financial Review and Westpac in 2012, Holly is dedicated to driving innovative change within the corporate and non-profit arenas. At 23, Holly has already worked with more than 20 non-profit organisations across the world. One of her proudest achievements was establishing a microfinance project in the Kenyan slums, which was made a semi-finalist in the Dell Social Innovation Awards in 2011. Holly serves as a Non-Executive Director on a number of boards, including Giving West and Global Voices, and as President of Rotary of Crawley and is the world's youngest Rotary President. In 2012 Holly was named Western Australian of the Year and 2012 Young Volunteer of the Year. Holly runs two businesses: a consulting and public speaking business and a leadership development company. Working with small businesses, major corporations and industry bodies, Holly advises on intergenerational communication and leadership and innovation and change management. Holly also works as a Business Analyst at global mining and metals company Rio Tinto. Holly is studying her final year of Bachelor degrees in Economics and Law and is a regular contributor to major Australian newspapers and publications.

Holly is one of 20 young Australian Entrepreneurs selected to represent the country at the G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance Summit in Moscow this month, where she'll have the opportunity to contribute to discussion on improving and fostering entrepreneurship around the world.

"If we want to change the world, we need to empower women and heal the broken hearts of men." – Larry Moss

I still remember the moment Noni Hazlehurst relayed that quote to me. I was with 19 other young social entrepreneurs from around Australia at a weekend retreat in Melbourne. The room went so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. Here we were, a room full of young leaders hell-bent on changing the world, navigating a plethora of domestic and international social problems, and in one sentence our differing identities and diverse goals were united around a common idea. It couldn't be that simple, could it?

Standing firmly in favour of the statement's validity was the fact that Noni was the one introducing us to it, and over the years she'd taught us everything from what was behind the arch window to 200 ways to use ice-cream sticks (and my still-intact ice-cream stick 'dreamcatcher' is proof that she hadn't led us astray to date). However, even adjusting for the 'Noni factor', the response was still astounding; without exception, everyone agreed with the statement.

Reframing the debate

"If you don't like what's being said, then change the conversation."
– Don Draper [1]

A response that wins universal approval from 20 Gen Ys deserves unpicking, so what underpinned the unequivocal support? Let's turn first to the imperative of empowering women. It's an idea that seems to now have general acceptance but is unfortunately still far from being realised. The state of women's rights in developing countries starkly demonstrates this. Of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty more than 70 per cent are women[2]; more women have died as a result of gendercide than all the men killed on the battlefields of the 20th century; and sex trafficking has become the second-largest illegal industry in the world, pipped only by the drug trade.[3] We know that women are disproportionately represented in statistics such as these, however, we also know that empowering women is the game changer for development and policy-making. Studies show investment in women and girls enhances economic productivity, improves development outcomes, and makes institutions and policy more representative.[4] The World Bank goes so far as to say that female education is one of the most cost-effective ways to spur development and that it yields enormous intergenerational gains because women are more likely than men to invest their wage in their children's development.[5] While this paper will focus on women in leadership within the business context of developed countries, it is critical to contextualise our Australian discussion within the broader framework of the global push for women's rights because, regardless of its severity or the form it takes, the oppression of women anywhere is a problem for people everywhere.

'*People* everywhere', not just '*women* everywhere': for too long the gender equality conversation has been marginalised because we've viewed it as a women's issue. Perplexingly, up until the last two decades or so, gender equality wasn't seen as a development issue, a human rights issue, a human capital issue or an economic growth issue. Instead, women's rights existed in a vacuum. Their promotion was viewed as something we *should* do rather than being seen as being inextricably linked to human rights and broader social and economic imperatives. Fortunately, we've begun to see a shift in the significance of, and reasoning for, women's empowerment. One example is the third-millennium development goal which focuses on women's empowerment and promoting gender equality. As United Nations Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon said: "Until women and girls are

liberated from poverty and injustice, *all* our goals – peace, security, sustainable development – stand in jeopardy."[6]

Not only do we need to make sure women's issues are fully integrated in formulating and upholding all pillars of our society, it's pivotal that we view men as part of the solution to gender equality, not part of the problem.[7] We need to move the discussion from 'women' to 'gender'; a subtle but powerful language change that helps provoke a paradigm shift that is crucial for the discourse to change. The participation of men is imperative in driving fundamental transformations and progress in how we live and work, because it is the intimate nature of relationships around the tables – both boardroom and kitchen – that need to change.[8] These changes in dynamics touch on the second part of the quote Noni shared, the need to 'heal the broken hearts of men'. It is crucial to recognise that gender roles and relations are dependent on social contexts where cultural, religious, economic, political and social circumstances constantly evolve. As women's roles have changed over time, they have clashed deeply with ingrained ideas and social norms about manhood and masculinity which were responsibe for many men growing up with the belief that dominant behaviour was a cornerstone to being a man.[9] Risk-taking and aggressive sexual behaviour on the part of young men is often applauded by peers and condoned by society; whereas emotional expression or any difficulties fulfilling the role of the 'breadwinner' are viewed as a sign of weakness.[10] It's important to acknowledge that these stereotypes do harm to both men and women. The impact on young men is demonstrated in national mental health statistics which show that suicide continues to be the leading cause of death in men, accounting for 22 per cent of all deaths. Only one in 10 men ask for help.[11] Men's mental health costs Australia's economy over nine million working days per annum at a cost of $3.27 billion each year.[12] As well as harming both genders, these stereotypes erode the possibility of establishing mutually respectful relationships that allow society as a whole to flourish, rather than supporting one gender at the other's expense, as the norm. We need all, not half, of the population mobilised and working together to establish gender-equitable societies and economies. That means reframing the debate from one which places blame, to one where everyone is responsible for creating change, big or small.

"As the role of women has evolved over time it has come into conflict with deeply ingrained ideas and socialised norms about manhood and masculinity that saw many men grow up to believe that dominant behaviour towards women was part of being a man."

This paper will examine some of the major hurdles to this solution. For Gen Y women this is the shift from combatting structural to invisible barriers to achievement and promotion. The devastating impact the mass media has had on image and self-concept of Gen Y women, and the comparative weakness of female support structures compared to the 'boys' club' fortress. I will argue we need a new conversation, a new approach and new leadership to propel us forward after stalling for close to two decades.

The shift from overt to covert barriers

"All forms of self-defeating behaviour are unseen and unconscious, which is why their existence is denied." – Verne Howard [13]

All young people, and all women, face challenges unique to their generation, and Gen Y women are no different – especially regarding women in leadership. To illustrate the difference we need to turn our attention back to the 19th and 20th centuries, to the time when the women's liberation movement began fighting for social permission to be equal. The first- and second-wave feminist movements during this period sought to break down the barriers of discrimination, abuse and injustice that existed across every aspect of culture, religion, economics and citizenship. And there were many barriers to overcome: when suffragette Susan B Anthony declared her dream, "Men their rights and nothing more; women their rights and nothing less" in 1868[14], Australian women were not allowed to vote, be admitted to Australian universities or own property, and rape within marriage was not recognised as a crime.[15] More than a century on, as Generation Y women began to make their way into the world they were confronted with a very different reality: a world of rapid technological advancement, mass consumerism, globalisation and *choice*. Thanks to the sacrifice, vision and persistence of previous generations, Generation Y is not confronted by a battle for permission. Instead, we face a world in which "it's not a question of who's going to let me, it's who's going to stop me."[16]

Before I'm decried as being one of those Gen Y women who thinks the battle for equality has been won already[17], allow me to clarify that this subtle (but powerful) change in mindset is not to suggest that we find ourselves on an equal playing field yet. Instead, it's intended to highlight that Generation Y women have never considered that there is a field we can't play on, or that there's a position on that field we can't hold, should we choose to. Where women of my grandmother's generation were told their career options were confined to selecting between being a nurse, teacher or typist, my generation were told they could be anything, and no longer face structural barriers that prevent them from making this a reality.

Despite the mindset shift though, we need look no further than the blocked, leaky corporate talent pipeline for evidence of the persistence of gender inequality: despite for many years more women graduating from Australian universities than men, our national gender pay gap is 17.5 per cent, only three per cent of Fortune 500 companies are headed by women and only 15.5 per cent of ASX 200 boards include women.[18] Few people disagree that somewhere on the climb between the graduation podium and the C-suite, women are getting lost. The contentious question is what – or who – is keeping us down? If we've removed the structural barriers that have traditionally stood in our way, why is the gap between the genders still so expansive and why do studies show that progress towards gender equality basically halted in the 1990s?[19] I'd argue it's because we've transitioned from overt, structural barriers (like those faced by our mothers) to more covert, invisible impediments: ingrained gender biases perpetuated by the media

that play havoc with the self-concept of an entire generation of women, and an inability to find the source of support necessary in the 'sisterhood', especially when contrasted with the power of the 'boys' club'. These impediments, purely by virtue of their unconscious and invisible nature, are much harder to tackle and have proven non-responsive to the tried and tested methods of first- and second-wave feminism.

Interestingly, and controversially, there's also concern that the evolution from overt to 'invisible' barriers has also reduced the impetus of efforts to achieve gender equality. Generation Y is often chastised for disassociating itself from the word 'feminism', for taking gender equality for granted and for having internalised the successes of feminism to the point where we question its relevance.[20] I would agree with statistics that show my generation distance themselves from the 'f' word and are in fact afraid of being labelled 'feminists', but I'd argue this is only because the evolution of the word has seen its mainstream connotation shift from 'equal rights' to 'hating men'.[21] "Why would we call ourselves that when it means hating men?" Is a comment I've heard countless times over the last few years as I've worked with thousands of young women around Australia running women's empowerment–focused organisations or leadership development programs. Conversely, when the conversation avoids the 'f' word and focuses on terminology such as 'equal rights' I'm yet to meet a young woman who's not on board. More than anything, this is further proof of the need to raise the broader consciousness of the connotations of our language use and the framing of the current debate, as well as lifting the cloak of invisibility from the latent attitudinal and cultural phenomena that are currently serving as roadblocks to progress in gender equality.

"More than any previous generation, Gen Y have grown up subject to the influence of the media…as a result, the media has played an increasingly powerful role as both the message and the messenger of an individual's self-concept."

Self-concept and the role of the media

"You can only be what you can see" – Miss Representation [22]

It is often said in developmental psychology that you behave on the outside in a manner consistent with the picture you have of yourself on the inside.[23] As children develop their sense of self, they move beyond applying concrete categories to themselves (such as hair colour and height) to include internal psychological traits, comparative evaluations and how others see them in their self-description.[24] To make these comparative evaluations, children turn to the world around them, with the nuclear family and the church traditionally playing key roles in the development of both social norms and self-concept.[25] However, with the influence of these traditional institutions declining in recent decades a developmental vacuum developed that mass media promptly filled. More than any previous generation, Gen Y has grown up subject to the influence of the media: the average Millennial grows up seeing in excess of 3000 marketing messages per day and by the age

of 13 has watched approximately 30 hours of television a week.[26] As a result, the media has played an increasingly powerful role as both the message and the messenger of individuals' self-concept.

So what does has our generation's reliance on the media to help shape our identity and view of the world mean for women in leadership? According to the award-winning documentary *Miss Representation*, the collective message sent by the media is that a woman's value and power are tied to her youth, beauty and sexuality, and not to her capacity as a leader or contributor to society.[27] The American Psychological Association's Taskforce on the Sexualization of Girls has found that media sexualisation of girls and young women is linked to mental health problems including depression, anxiety and eating disorders in women.[28] The latter alone affecting an estimated 65 per cent of American women.[29] In an analysis conducted by the Geena Davis Institute for Gender in Media, women were shown to be outnumbered three to one in family films produced between 2006 and 2009.[30] Over the same period, not one female character was depicted in G-rated family films in the field of medical science, as a business leader, in law or in politics.[31] In these films, 80.5 per cent of all working characters are male, in contrast to the reality of gender parity in workforce participation.[32] Women are more likely to be shown in ways that focus on sexual availability, passiveness and dependence on other people – they are motherly or domestic, sexualised or represented as victims.[33] This bias in the portrayal of women extends beyond works of Hollywood fiction to mainstream media. Powerful women are frequently depicted as harsh and unsympathetic[34], and when they do hold positions of authority the media tends to call them into question, both as women and as leaders.[35] With only three per cent of positions of influence in entertainment, publishing, advertising and telecommunications held by women, it's probably no surprise that the narratives Gen Y women have grown up with and the archetype of the female leader that's prevailed in mainstream media has been so inherently biased.[36] As a result, we've got a generation with a confidence issue.

"…women will only apply for jobs that they believe they meet four of five selection criteria, whereas their male counterparts will apply when they believe they meet two."

If we believe Sheryl Sandberg's manifesto in *Lean In* that success is a mindset, then it comes as no surprise Gen Y women are being held back, and that their lack of self-confidence sees them fail to raise their hands for opportunities and to pull back when they should be 'leaning in'.[37] Research shows that in the early years of primary school just as many girls and boys aspire to be President of the United States, but by 15 the number of young women aiming for that position pales in comparison to their male counterparts.[38] Young women's lack of confidence and ambition manifests again when they enter the workforce, with Harvard Business Review research highlighting that women will only apply for jobs when they believe they meet four of five selection criteria, whereas their male counterparts will apply when they believe they meet two.[39] In the workplace, lack of confidence strikes again with women's failure to 'ask' for opportunities being described as one of the four ways women unintentionally stunt their careers.[40]

It's crucial that we start taking steps to call out sexist and offensive portrayal of women in the media. We can begin by using our voices on social media to grab the attention of companies and express our disapproval but, even more powerfully, we can exert our influence through our purchasing power. Women control 86 per cent of consumer power in the US and represent a similarly powerful consumer base in Australia – we need to empower consumers to make more informed choices away from organisations that create, use or enable sexist media.[41] To adequately empower consumers to make these informed choices, we need to establish an Australia-based independent institution to shine the spotlight on gender inequalities in the media and work with the media and entertainment industry to engage, educate and influence content creators around the need for gender balance, to reduce stereotyping and create a wide variety of female characters to clearly send a message to children and young adults that women are just as valued as men. We need to halt the perpetuation of negative female stereotypes to reshape the self-concept of young women and ensure we have a generation that grows up believing it's their brains and leadership capabilities that matter, not their sexuality and youth.

The sisterhood vs the boys' club

"There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women." – Madeline Albright [42]

I'm about to boldly go where few Gen Y have publicly gone before and open the lid on the can of worms it seems near taboo to discuss: namely, the fact that women aren't all that great at supporting other women. I'll admit to having mild trepidations about taking on this topic because it was only last year that I witnessed a female Federal Senator get publicly booed and heckled for bringing this subject up. Only three weeks after that presentation I witnessed the same thing happen to a senior businesswoman at a 'women in leadership' event. This vocal outrage strikes me as quizzical for two reasons:

1. In my discussions with young women around Australia, the challenges they face with older women in the workforce (ranging from passive lack of support through to active bullying) is one of the most frequent topics of conversation, suggesting that the observation is by no means unfounded.

2. In discussing gender equality why would we apply a critical lens to the relationship between the genders and not apply the same critical lens to the state of relationships among members of the gender?

A little critical self-reflection never hurt anyone, right?

To be clear, I'm not painting all women with the same brush – I'm the first to acknowledge that there are incredible women out there doing a phenomenal job of mentoring other women. However, I can say that in both my own experience and the experience of the scores of young women I've discussed this matter with,

these women appear to be the exception rather than the rule. I've spent just over a decade in a variety of casual, part-time and full-time jobs doing everything from waiting tables to preparing legal briefs, and over that period I'm disappointed to say that I have borne the brunt of senior women who don't support young women far too many times. The manifestations of this lack of support have varied from the more passive omissions, such as being the only one ignored in office meetings or when invitations go out for team social gatherings, through to active handicapping, such as one instance where it became apparent that a manager I was working for intentionally held back my workflow until as near as possible to the project deadlines, so as to maximise the chance that I wouldn't be able to hit my performance objectives. In one job, a male colleague had told me of an internal job opportunity that sounded like a good fit for my skills and interests. When I reached out to the female manager for an application form, I was sent a job description that was well outside of the scope of the role that had been described. Despite being assured the position description was indeed correct, weeks later in informal discussion with the person who ended up getting the job, it was apparent that I'd been sent an alternative job description that would ensure I didn't put my hat in the ring for the promotion. I'd been deliberately shut out of the process. Stories with these same narrative elements of covert omissions and behind-the-scenes sabotage are unfortunately all too common; when I ran a discussion forum on this topic with 20 of the country's most dynamic female leaders in 2011, all of them agreed that the worst workplace treatment (or as most described it, bullying) they'd experienced was from women.

"Research suggests that women are particularly unlikely to help one another if there is a small difference in age because they feel more threatened. The lack of support sourced from the 'sisterhood' is exacerbated by the comparative strength of male dominated networks."

What research does exist on gendered bullying seems to support this finding: a 2007 study by the Workplace Bullying Institute found that women were more likely to target other women (71 per cent), compared to men who bully other men (54 per cent).[43] Research suggests that women are particularly unlikely to help one another if there is a small difference in age because they feel more threatened.[44] The lack of support from the 'sisterhood' is exacerbated by the comparative strength of male-dominated networks. In an Executive Women Australia (EWA) study released last year, 60 per cent of women reported male-dominated referral systems as being one of the biggest barriers to success.[45] Commenting on the results, EWA director Tara Cheesman remarked that the increased tendency for executives to look internally to fill roles exacerbated the perpetuation of the 'boys' club'.[46] More often than not women don't have, as men do, someone in the C-suite who will put their name forward and go in to bat for them. When they do, data shows, they are 27 per cent more likely than their unsponsored female peers to seek a raise and 22 per cent more likely to ask for the stretch assignments that put them on the radar of the higher-ups.[47] The 'sponsor effect' can have an enormous impact on career advancement.

When women don't actively support and advocate for other talented women, or worse still put up roadblocks to hinder the progress of other women, they subvert

the progress not only of young women but of gender equality altogether. We need to swap hamstringing for championing and when we achieve new heights in our respective fields of endeavour we need to look to see what young women we can bring along with us. Given a Penn State University study shows that male mentors seem to edge out female mentors when it comes to helping female protégés climb the ladder of success, it's important that we also encourage senior executive men to mentor young female talent.[48] This requires us to tear down stereotypes and double standards, as demonstrated in a study published by the Center for Work–Life Policy. Worringly the Harvard Business Review found men in high positions at companies were nervous meeting a younger woman one-on-one because of how it might be perceived.[49] We need to get real. Women are not a threat to the wives or partners of older, senior men, and it's critical that we improve the intergenerational support, advice and assistance given to young women if we want to make a quantum leap in the number of women in senior leadership positions in business – and we know this will mean better outcomes.

"It's critical that we improve the intergenerational support, advice and assistance given to young women if we want to make a quantum leap in the number of women in senior leadership positions in business."

Conclusion

The gender gap isn't just an image problem: it has real implications for the performance of every aspect of our society: In business, in the community, in politics and for families. Despite the gains made in recent decades, the transformation of the barriers facing young women and the slow progress across major 'women in leadership' headline indicators suggests that our current approach to tackling these challenges either isn't working or is working at an incremental pace. We need to raise the salience of ingrained cultural biases and reframe our current debate: placing gender equality firmly on every agenda, not at the periphery, and ensuring that the language used in the debate makes everyone feel included and responsible for reaching the solution. We also need to become more critical viewers of the messages the mass media bombards us with and ensure we use the power of both social media and the economic means available to us to force the market to change the messages it's sending to women. Finally, we need to ensure that we're actively supporting the development and progress of young women through formal and informal advocacy and mentoring programs. This issue necessitates strong leadership from individuals and organisations who are serious about diversity and we need that leadership *now* – so, who's ready to step up?

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6. Succeeding in work across the life course

Associate Professor Elizabeth Brooke, Dr Deborah Towns, and Professor Nita Cherry

This chapter explores career barriers affecting older women and provides recommendations for employers and government.

Elizabeth Brooke is Director, Business Work and Ageing Centre (BWA) for Research, Swinburne University of Technology. Since 2002 Associate Professor Brooke has been researching the ageing workforce, including large-scale quantitative projects and qualitative organisational case studies. She is currently a Chief Investigator in two ARC Linkages projects, Retiring Women and Working Late, and previously was the Australian Director of an international study into the ageing IT workforce (2002-2006). Her VicHealth Public Health Fellowship (2006-11) focused on retaining older workers in the aged care sector. She has published on age discrimination in employment and the economic benefits of mature age workers.

Dr Deborah Towns is a research officer in the Business Work and Ageing Centre for Research (BWA) at Swinburne University of Technology. Her recently completed PhD is in Australian labour history and focused on women in the Victorian education department in the 20th century. It's in preparation for publication as a book. She has publications in women's work, leadership, education, girls' education, feminism, and biographies. She has held the position of Manager of the Equal Opportunity Unit in the Victorian Education Department as well as other management roles in the public and private sectors. Her academic experience in qualitative methodologies provides a strong methodological basis for her involvement in the fieldwork requirements of two of BWA's ARC projects.

Professor Nita Cherry is Professor of Leadership in the Faculty of Business and Enterprise, Swinburne University of Technology. She has worked on issues of leadership with many individuals and teams in a range of industry and government sectors in Australia over the last 35 years. She has contributed to the theoretical examination of significant issues of practice that can inform policy, as well as throwing light on dimensions of collective and individual behaviours during times of change. She has been a member of two successful Australian Research Council Linkage Grants.

This chapter examines the factors affecting women's career progression in three sectors of employment: tertiary education, financial services, and schools and Victorian state government services. Traditional linear paths are changing and more flexible career pathways are commonplace. Older women need to keep working to compensate for inadequate superannuation balances, yet their careers are difficult to sustain. The chapter particularly explores factors affecting older women's working lives and the cumulative barriers mitigating success in their careers, and proposes recommendations for government and employers.

The chapter is based on data collected in a study funded by the Australian Research Council: *Retiring women: understanding female work-life transitions*.

Sectoral employment profiles

The academic workforce is ageing by comparison with other occupations. The percentage of lecturers and tutors over 45 is 54 per cent, compared to 40 per cent for a comparable occupational group of professionals, according to Hugo.[1] The growth in older academics exceeds that of younger academics and Hugo maintains that there is a 'missing generation' of younger academics under 40 years of age. Despite the generally ageing academic workforce, women's representation decreases with age. The sex ratio of men to women is 1.4 for men 45 and over compared with 0.987 for men under 40 years.[2]

The trend in academic workforce employment is also towards a contracting core of permanent positions. Over the period between 1991 and 2006, the academic staff of Australian universities increased by 18.5 per cent, although the increase in contract staff (29.4 per cent) was significantly higher than in tenured staff (12.1 per cent).[3] According to the Work and Careers Universities Survey, a national survey of Australian university workforces (n=21,994), 44 per cent of academic staff are on fixed-term contracts.[4] May estimates that of the 67,000 or more casual academic staff employed in universities in 2011, 57 per cent were women.[5] The trend towards fixed-term and casual employment indicates that female workers are bearing the brunt of growing employment insecurity. In the past 10 years, there has been a 78 per cent increase in the number of women above senior lecturer level compared with the number of men. However, there are almost three times as many men at the top, among professors and associate professors (9535 men compared with 3772 women). Of 39 vice chancellors, nine are women.[6]

Teaching and public service work in Australia are significant sites to examine women's career strategies as they age. Women make up 76 per cent of the 65,000 teachers in Victoria.[7] Teaching is perceived as 'women's work' and the education sector as a feminised workforce. Nevertheless, women comprise only 45 per cent of principals in schools.[8] Female teachers and public servants have also enjoyed paid maternity leave and long-term family leave since the 1980s, designed to support their careers. Teaching is also an ageing workforce, with nearly 40 per cent aged 50 and older, with older female teachers comprising 30 per cent of the teaching workforce, compared with nine per cent for older male

teachers. Schools are also characterised by having 75 per cent of teachers in full-time employment, with 25 per cent having fixed-term and casual contracts. Overall, 39 per cent of staff work part-time, with twice as many women (44 per cent) working part-time than men (22 per cent). There are approximately a further 10,000 teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teachers as Casual Relief Teachers.[9]

Women form 60 per cent of the Victorian public service (VPS) workforce. This high proportion of women is concentrated in the public healthcare and government schools sectors (79 per cent and 76 per cent respectively), which together comprise 62 per cent of the VPS workforce. There is a higher proportion of women across all salary ranges, except at the highest level (>$100,000), and, significantly, there are only three female CEOs across the 11 VPS departments.[10] The VPS workforce mirrors the Australian public service where, "for the first time, four generations are working side by side in the workplace".[11] The number of part-time workers is increasing, with women more than five times (21.5 per cent) more likely to work part-time than men (four per cent). The VPS is also an ageing workforce, with women and men aged 50 and older making up 32 per cent of staff. Casual and fixed-term appointments are increasing and make up 23 per cent of the total workforce (including teachers), with a third aged over 45, and two-thirds of these older workers women.[12]

"In the academic sector, career progression requires the accrual of research publications across the working lives of academics. Publications need to commence from graduation onwards, yet this timing coincides with childbearing years."

In the financial and insurance sector, the proportion of women increases with age. Men under 45 form 45 per cent of the full-time workforce and women 55 per cent, a reasonably even gender split. For the 45–54 age group, the percentage of women rises to 67 per cent, while male employee figures decline to 33 per cent. However, of the workforce aged 55 and over, women are at least five times more numerous than men (68 per cent to 32 per cent). The types of occupations represented in the sector include administrative and banking staff, both having high female representation. Part-time work increases by age for both men and women. Of men under 45, only five per cent work part-time, compared with 22 per cent of women in this age group. Once over 55, 32 per cent of women work part-time, while the proportion of part-time workers also rises for their male counterparts (24 per cent).[13]

Building career pathways across working lives: Opportunities and barriers

A total of 95 stakeholders were interviewed for the study across 2010–11, including managers (human resources [HR] and diversity), school principals and professionals in the tertiary education, financial services and schools and VPS sectors. Additional interviews were held with 21 'generic' stakeholders

representing employment, education and training, and professional organisations and unions.

In the academic sector, career progression requires the accrual of research publications across academics' working lives. Publications need to begin at graduation, yet this timing coincides with childbearing years. As a university diversity director commented, referring to early-career academics, "having children, how do you keep them in their profession? How do you keep them in academia? If they need to get a PhD to do what they want to do then how do you keep them there?"

HR managers in smaller universities mentioned a range of flexibilities. As one HR manager commented, "We have a number of policies related to work–life balance, flexible work options, we've got a working from home policy … so we've got the flexible work options, and there are a lot of ad hoc arrangements where flexibility is built in. I think we're quite good with flexibility". Flexibility, however, is a two-edged sword. A diversity manager's view is that careers cannot be built from casual sessional work, and that women remain "on the fringes" as "they don't get the connection into the institution unless it's very well managed". Women's casual working arrangements could work against their opportunities to build continuous careers, as this manager commented:

> *"I think the downside of that is the fact that quite often they are just coming in and teaching and disappearing again, or tutoring and disappearing again. I think you've now got a class of people who've only ever worked in this sort of environment. Maybe they've worked at three different universities, that are casual, and it might suit them too."*

At higher levels of the academic hierarchy, programs such as a university-wide mentoring scheme for women and a shadowing program for senior women are seen as successfully supporting leadership potential. Direct exposure to role models is seen as a success factor:

> *"I think having people who've reached that level talk to a group of women who have the potential to get to that level makes quite a difference as to whether or not they may aspire to do it and decide, look I can do this, or no it's not something I want to do."*

Women's leadership styles are concurrently challenged by "very masculine-type university environments" such as engineering, science and information technology. An equal-opportunity stakeholder also commented that university size can be a factor, "Some of the huge ones are very blokey – very male dominated. And it depends on your vice chancellor to a huge extent as to whether or not they appreciate the different skill set that women bring".

In the Victorian government school sector, 39 per cent of teachers work part-time, the majority of whom are women. Another 25 per cent of teachers work casually or in fixed-term positions and family leave is not available to casual staff. Women returning from family leave can easily arrange part-time work, but this is more difficult for older women. As one school principal pointed out, "The Department has very clear policies about returning to a school after family leave so in saying that

we are the people managers, we work within the guidelines". Yet there appears to be a contradiction in re-engaging older women, as another principal admitted that women tend to work longer than men, "because in many cases they've had children, which has an impact on their superannuation".

The principals concurred that casual and part-time staff miss out on information, particularly professional learning. An education policy stakeholder concurred with the principals' views:

> *"It's a school-based decision and often we find that principals tend to invest more disproportionately in terms of their leadership team, who are overwhelmingly full-time, and the capacity for women to have access to those leadership positions and maintain those positions even if they have the need to reduce their time fractions is important."*

Older staff members, in particular, are seen as missing out on leadership opportunities if they work part-time, as very few part-time leadership positions are available in schools. The principals find that balancing the timetable is difficult with part-time staff. However, as one principal stated, "From a personal view as the leader of the school I try to be as flexible as possible with requests for people". Rural school principals tend to provide more flexible work opportunities than city schools due to having to recruit staff in rural areas so they can fulfil their schools' curriculum needs.

"…women tend to work longer than men, 'because in many cases they've had children which has an impact on their superannuation'."

A contradiction was flagged between older women's lower superannuation balances and opportunities to continue working due to breaks in service. As a principal said, "They need the superannuation" but she knew of women with excellent experience who can not get work. Yet, not just "older teachers per se but women in particular are seen as a very costly resource. There's a bit of that attitude out amongst our principals … I can get one and half new teachers for an experienced teacher who has transitioned out". Men who stay in teaching could be "seen as a better investment by a number of principals".

In the VPS, the flexible work policies on offer make government departments "an attractive place to work", according to one HR manager. If appropriate to local needs, staff work from home and some work between school hours. A senior manager was positive about flexible working arrangements: "So ultimately you might get more productivity and more efficiency and generally, perhaps, someone that's a bit more reliable". Providing flexible work can be organisationally difficult, as one HR manager asserted, as some people are in "jobs which cannot be worked in a job share arrangement so others … see it as 'inequitable' treatment". Another HR manager stated, "We are leaders in policies and programs for flexibility with work from home, part-time work hours and a lot of our work is not 9–5. But it may get knocked back by a local manager", while another manager noted that "some managers are blockers".

Interviewees gave some examples of flexible work practices in the VPS. A male Deputy Secretary worked four days a week as he was transitioning into retirement.

A rural-based older female manager worked often at home and commuted to her city office. A HR manager insisted that there is a need to look at 'normalising' part-time and other types of flexible work. However, he emphasised that "there is the issue of getting the balance right" because it is important to consider "the organisation's needs and the person's needs".

Leadership development programs are offered through the VPS' State Services Authority for all government departments. Mentoring and passing on corporate knowledge is available both formally and informally. Older women are not specifically targeted; however, one department had a 'senior women's forum', where women have opportunities to network. "Knowledge capture is a huge one," related a HR manager, "We have standard operating procedures for our workforce, but it hasn't been for necessarily retirement, but just as a business continuity perspective to make sure that we're keeping that knowledge within the organisation".

"In the banking sector, flexible working practices were viewed as widespread and available for men as well as for women."

In the banking sector, flexible working practices are viewed as widespread and available for men as well as for women. Organisations may have a parental leave program, discussions of the hours a parent wants to work, and workshops for men and women when they return from parental leave. A flexibility toolkit can set out different forms of flexible leave works for people leaders and employees, and helps in training HR managers on leading flexibility. A senior HR manager commented, "The view of management is as long as you get the work done, it doesn't really matter how and what your hours of work are, and I think that's great".

According to a diversity manager, their organisation is working to manage the retention of women and nearly half of women and one third of men in their organisation are working flexibly with a "good split across age groups". Another HR informant reported, "We do have a lot of working from home type arrangements, part-time arrangements and job-share style arrangements as well. We have three to six months of national seminars on work–life balance … on how they're balancing the demands of part-time versus full-time, how they're balancing the demands of new roles with old roles".

In these organisations, the selection of people at higher levels for flexible working arrangement appears to operate well. According to an HR manager, "we do have lots of senior people working flexibly and we are also profiling them because we don't want it reinforced that it is just for working mothers".

Across all sectors, age and gender stereotypes were identified as barriers. One HR manager considered that "women may not be prepared to do extra professional development as they have family responsibilities", which can hinder their career progress. Older staff can be seen as preventing the promotion of younger staff. "We want targeted recruitment for younger workers", stated a manager. "Blokey" was how one department was described by the HR manager, which she considered the reason women tend to leave it in their 30s, due to a lack of senior female role models.

Overall, women were considered not to have a retirement plan in the same way that men do, and were considered less financially literate. Significantly,

one generic stakeholder remarked that soon the community could be facing a "whole new level of poverty, of women with super but living on the poverty line". Superannuation stakeholders commented on what they saw as one of women's problems: not being assertive enough about their needs in career development.

Career pathways: Findings and implications for organisations and the government

Women in the university sector are predominantly situated at lower levels in the academic workforce rather than in high-level positions. Part-time work influences the progression of older women's careers and is a critical barrier to ascending the career ladder. Due to casual employment arrangements, women have not built careers but remained in segmented positions in the university system, from which they commonly do not emerge.

In the schools sector, female teachers who hold ongoing positions can take family leave, which is not available to contract or casual staff. The study also found it was easier for young women to obtain flexible work arrangements than older women. In the VPS, despite the higher level support for flexibility, working flexibly was dependent upon the decisions of local workforce managers. Managers emphasised that opportunities to work flexibly were local decisions, and that work requirements had to be fulfilled. Women constitute three of the 11 CEOs of departments and form a significantly lower proportion than men at the highest salary levels. There was a dearth of examples of targeted programs for older women.

Of the three sectors, flexibility is implemented most systematically in the financial sector through training for HR managers in leading flexibility. Women ascend to higher positions, particularly those managers have identified as having talent. In summary, while flexible work supports carers' needs or in some cases transition to retirement, it does not necessarily support leadership capacity. The term 'flexible working' has been applied to aspects of work–life balance, yet the outcome of flexible working can lead to gender inequity in pay and levels of seniority.[14] A key finding of this section on opportunities and challenges to older women's career paths is that older women's careers were built on work–life flexibilities. As women form the majority of casual and part-time workers in all sectors, this prevented a consistent track record and the types of work valued at later career stages.

Practices supporting older women's career paths

Current policies and practices to assist an older workforce transition to retirement are both variable and underdeveloped in the university sector. HR directors in several smaller universities indicated that little attention has been given to developing retirement pathways. One HR manager commented on the informality of

retirement policies, "probably a bit more informal and more around, again, flexibility for part-time contract work, or industry engagement work, or something they might well be interested in in relationship with the university. That happens informally, but quite regularly".

At higher academic levels, a diversity manager mentioned that the ageing workforce poses a risk which has been addressed by succession planning and mentorship. A senior financial manager commented, "For the senior executive people it – once again if you can hand on some of your knowledge and expertise then some of that can actually be extremely useful as well".

Older women generally were not identified as a group which would be selected for career development. As a diversity stakeholder commented, "I don't think that we target older women particularly or treat them differently than younger women". Yet examples existed of the active organisation of senior women's careers. A vice chancellor organised the career path of a senior executive: "She is now doing projects and mentoring others ... We still have people working here full-time at 75. We have other people that want to retire at 50, or go – I wouldn't say 'retirement' ... probably go to a part-time capacity".

Yet, at the same time, policies could be – and are – used to ease people into retirement. Pre-retirement contracts are selectively applied by a HR director who commented, "Okay I'm definitely going to retire in 12 months or 18 months and I'll give you that guarantee and go on to a pre-retirement contract that says X, Y and Z". Covert discrimination was observed in the selection of peers as colleagues and drinking partners, "If you've a young workforce then you can exclude – it's very easy to exclude people because, oh we're going down to the pub for a drink".

"…while flexible work supports carers' needs or in some cases transition to retirement, it does not necessarily support leadership capacity."

A senior diversity expert commented that the combination of the flexibility of part-time work and seniority has not promoted career progression, "I would love to see more part-time positions offered at senior levels. So that someone at a HEW (Higher Education Worker) level nine or 10 could work three days a week and take care of their parents or do …any other things they'd want to do".

In the schools system, a transition plan enabled the incoming regional manager to work with the retiring one. The department provides refresher programs for teachers returning from family leave, coming out of retirement or changing professions in their later years. Older teachers who had retired but returned to teaching can be perceived as making enormous contributions. A principal explained how retired teachers had filled contracts and been "sensational". She considered that "mature women have a lot to offer in terms of succession planning and mentoring" but emphasised that:"It's very hard to get part-time promotion positions."

In the VPS, a stakeholder related feedback from older women who felt that they were no longer seen as valuable in the workplace and that they should move on. A range of age stereotypes exist regarding women staying in the workforce at older ages. A superannuation stakeholder commented, "The belief is that they are not going to stay in work but it is also a fallacy today to believe that younger

people stay in the same job". She noted that "there could be the attitude that older women are not going to be here much longer so their input's not worth getting … whereas because of that experience that they do have, their input's probably more relevant". She concluded that older women "can certainly be a hugely productive part of the workforce if given the right opportunities", because they can "devote a lot more time to work than a lot of the younger women can".

In the financial sector, a HR professional at a high level saw the bank's policy as driven by diversity awareness and structures. Diversity surveys enable feedback on views and mean management can take action in response. Older women are not singled out as a group, but are included in the mature age cohort.

"Although flexibility enshrined in government policies supports women's employment it does not necessarily support their career progression."

The ageing workforce is viewed popularly as a potential loss to retirement as "our risk area where there is a slightly older demography (so it's important to have a system) of formal knowledge transfer". The focus is on succession planning and mentorship and a transition to the younger generation. Career trajectories are less related to leadership than to the organisation's requirements. As a diversity manager commented:

> *"But we don't have a formal sort of age process where people are going to workshops and capturing information. It's more sort of on the job through our succession process. So it's the people who will be doing the job next that are getting the knowledge."*

The issue of retirement is viewed as an individual choice: "Some want to work until they're 80. Others are wanting to transition to retirement at 55. So, having said that, I think we could be doing more for both". The organisation had developed a seminar series examining different aspects of retirement, health goals, financial goals and relationship goals which employees could nominate themselves to attend.

Government policies and implications for organisations

Although flexibility enshrined in government policies supports women's employment, it does not necessarily support their career progression. Sustaining career momentum means being able to manage transitions between full- and part-time work at different intervals, making up for time spent out of the workforce and accelerating learning at particular critical times. This study suggests that making the transition from part-time to full-time work tends to be more supported in the banking sector than in universities and state government services, including schools. However, developing leadership capacity and experience remains a challenge across all sectors. Similarly, the predominance of women in casual

work means that women are “on the fringes” at the times when they need to be climbing mainstream career ladders.

At the government level, the policy of deferring government pensions to the age of 67 and the necessity for women to continue working later due to lower superannuation balances highlight the need for proactive policies supported by financial incentives to keep women in the workforce. The problem of casual workers lacking superannuation will be a major continuing problem for public policy.

Currently, work–family flexibilities are more likely to be implemented earlier in women’s careers, with more attention paid to maternity leave and bringing women back into the workforce than at the end of their working lives, when caring responsibilities can increase. Pathways that enable work and caring responsibilities to coexist at later stages of working lives are essential.

Similarly, proactive policies to retain older women’s knowledge in the workforce are required. New pathways that capture this knowledge should be forged. Women’s part-time and casual work status means that many have missed earlier periods of skills development. Skills development can target older women in similar ways to mature-age strategies applied in particular occupation such as.

However, it is also important to implement career paths that integrate flexibility with climbing career ladders across gender and age groups. These should be offered to both men and women in order to counter gender-based understandings of flexibility. The public service can take the lead in this area.

At the organisational level, role models are invaluable in demonstrating the value and productivity that can be offered by older women. The option of high-level positions combined with flexibility needs to be more widespread.

Organisations can make a major contribution in providing education about how to organise the work–life balance proactively across the course of an entire life. Multi-generational workforces are now a reality for many organisations and more sophisticated HR policies need to reflect this. ‘Retirement’ expectations act as age stereotypes which can be countered by demonstrating that this is a two-way street rather than a dead end.

Managers at all levels are important in taking – or failing to take – initiatives that can significantly affect turning points in career pathways, but they often lack information about how to implement relevant policies or respond to inquiries about career paths. Leadership involves the maxim ‘lead your own career’, and this applies to portable careers both within and across organisations. In this study, the finance sector was the most educated sector at all levels and much can be learned from their practices.

However, HR practitioners across all three sectors do not necessarily target older people for recruitment and promotion. This requires more finely targeted interventions around the types of work available for older women. Managers need to look at job descriptions and break them down by tasks, skill requirements and time, rather than just looking to place ‘a body in a job’. Longer working lives will require variable and innovative career pathways.

In conclusion, women's career progression requires proactive policies and practices across the whole career path, given that career options and choices in later life will be a reflection of the roads taken earlier in life. The cumulative impact of interrupted and casual employment at critical times is a particularly important factor in developing organisational as well as public policy. The potential of women as leaders should be supported by developing career paths across their working lives to encourage women to have aspirations, and to do better rather than just stay where they are.

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7. Understanding the changing role of women in society

Liz Ritchie

This chapter explores the potential for both genders to deconstruct preconceived models in society and to unlock mental barriers.

Liz Ritchie was appointed CEDA State Director for Western Australia in November 2011 and during this time has expanded the WA Division to its current unprecedented levels.

Liz has worked at CEDA for over five years prior. During this time she completed her Master of Applied Science (Organisational Dynamics), completing a thesis on the topic of 'Organisational Change and its Impacts'. Liz held successive management positions within CEDA including the position of Associate Director and Acting State Director for Tasmania and Victoria.

Liz also has a special interest in gender issues co-authoring the CEDA publication entitled Women in Leadership: Looking below the surface. This paper focuses on the CEDA's Women in Leadership series outcomes from the Victorian series in 2011. Liz actively champions women's interests through presentations, research reports and papers, and mentoring women from a range of industries, including Women in Mining in Western Australia (WIMWA).

Completing a Bachelor of Arts (Public Relations) from RMIT, in 1999, Liz has worked in marketing, business development and event management for 12 years both in Australia and abroad.

The debate surrounding gender equity in Australia has reached an all-time high, with women making only incremental inroads. Young female leaders in the 21st century are part of a new cohort of women who have grown up with many rights that were not awarded to the generations of women before them, including the right to remain employed despite being married and having children.

Regardless of this social and economic progress, there are still important areas of life that remain out of bounds and out of reach to the majority of women. Most significantly, leadership in business and public life continue to be the domain of men. Women's role in the workplace is still in a state of flux in Australia, and continues to be a phenomenon with which businesses and individuals struggle. Such inequity creates social, cultural and intellectual barriers which can constrain a nation's prosperity.

This chapter explores a new paradigm that provides a different lens to viewing and interpreting male and female leadership. It will discuss the potential for both genders to deconstruct preconceived models in society. Organisations have started to embrace the methodology of 'unconscious bias'[1], by referring to gender stereotypes and discrimination. This stems from psychoanalytical principles that

provide a framework for discussion. Using a range of psychoanalytical frames as a tool for understanding these issues, this paper reveals possible reasons why progress is slow. It highlights some entrenched mental models that lay dormant in the unconscious. It aims to unlock the possibility of gendered mindsets that are socially constructed in our formative years and hold us back. Through the process of enactment we can become trapped in following cultural norms embedded deep in our psyche. Until these cultural dimensions are understood, analysed and reconstructed, the pace of change will continue to be disproportionately slow.

The business case for closing the gender gap is evidenced in reports conducted by leading organisations such as McKinsey[2], Goldman Sachs[3], and Bain and Chief Executive Women (CEW)[4] that support the merits of gender equity. In fact, research shows that by closing the gender participation gap we could expect GDP to increase by 11 per cent in Australia[5] and by reducing the gender pay gap by one percentage point we could increase GDP by around $4.4 billion[6].

The latest Australian Census of Women in Leadership for 2012 found that women are only holding 9.2 per cent of executive positions and the same figure for directorships in the top 500 ASX companies.[7] Yet, in a recent report[8] almost 90 per cent of both male and female respondents were convinced of the benefits of greater gender parity, with more than three-quarters of the respondents confirming it should be a critical strategic imperative for their own organisations.[9] The ASX also recently released its latest findings on listed companies adopting gender diversity policy, identifying some of the key benefits as improved culture and corporate image, improvements to the bottom line, broadening skills and experience within the workplace, access to a broader talent pool and a better environment for generating ideas.[10] There is also evidence from McKinsey, in its *Women Matter* report, that supports greater financial outcomes.

> "Australia ranks well in the younger age groups but once a woman reaches her child bearing years between the ages of 25 and 45, Australia has significantly lower rates than other OECD nations."

The business case supports stronger economic outcomes, yet even with this surfeit of evidence, the issue of gender equality is stifled. So what is holding women back? To contradict what is good for business and to ignore the facts and figures would seem perverse in regards to any other organisational setting. Yet, this intractable issue seems to evade logic and common sense.

The key to economic growth is embracing a diverse society, both in our families and in our organisations. This diversity will build a tolerance for a variety of leadership styles and limit the homogenous patterns that currently exist and shape our work.

The desire for change is real, but perhaps it is what we cannot see that is deeply intertwined in our cultures, in our past and in our present. Perhaps it's the unexamined pathways, the unexamined gender differences, the unexamined authority and leadership barriers that leave us in the aforementioned state of flux. The link between the social construction of self and how it manifests in modern organisational structures can offer a new paradigm for considering gender roles in society.

What is a social construction of gender?

Bruce Hart[12] described gender as a social construct created and maintained between men and women, not a fixed quantity that one is born with. The terms masculine and feminine are seen not as belonging to either men or women, but as formed in the relationships between them. The social construction of gender emphasises the various stereotypical norms dominant in western culture that prescribe different roles to men and women and, in turn, reinforce the inequalities between them.

In the division of the household tasks, particular views of men and women are perpetuated. This pertains not only to the allocation of tasks but also to each person's perception of themselves as a man or a woman. These perceptions include attitudes about what men and women should do and characteristics ascribed to each gender. For example, men are described as more logical, more competitive and better at technical tasks and women as more sensitive, inclusive and nurturing, knowing instinctively how to care for children. Within the family, self-concept is an internal working model that guides and regulates behaviour. As these models are carried forward to other contexts, they contain gendered aspects of the self and others that help recreate the patterns of gender relations and power inequalities in society.[13]

Essentially, what Hart is describing are the mental models created within both men and women, which encourage them to assume certain characteristics, behaviours, roles and personalities. Socially constructed views of ourselves are internalised and become unconscious working models that we bring to our gender and, in turn, our society.

"Society's social constructions create a mental mind set of 'our role' and this silently permeates within organisational systems and leadership."

It is not surprising that many of the challenges to women's advancement occur within the childbearing years, as women still assume the role of primary caregivers. This is evidenced by Productivity Commission reports on female labour participation. Australia ranks well in the younger age groups, but once women reach the age they are most likely to have children, between 25 and 45, Australia has significantly lower participation rates than other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations.[14] Equally, a recent report by Bain and CEW reported that between the ages of 30 and 39 there is a 20 per cent confidence gap between men and women in junior to senior middle management positions about their ability to become a senior business leader. These results come during the time when many professional women are starting to confront the challenges of integrating the demands of work and family.

If they come from a dual income-earning family, women perform almost double the unpaid work within the home, according to an OECD report.[15] Even when families are financially supported by the woman, the amount of unpaid work is equal. Yet, when men are the primary financial source of income for the family, women undertake three times the amount of unpaid work.

This fact is supported anecdotally in discussions with women who are currently in employment, either full-time or part-time, or who are the primary caregiver. A woman in her early 30s who participated in CEDA's action research roundtable in 2010[16] supported this view:

> *"There is a whole of family challenge; the gender roles that men and women play are still very real today. There is pressure from family and friends believing you should play a certain gender role. You are made to feel guilty for going to work, for leaving your children and it's assumed that someone else is raising your children. This is an enormous emotional and mental hurdle to overcome."*

One of the other participants supported this view, adding:

> *"Australia has had a culture which enabled one breadwinner and this is the genesis of all those 50s type expectations of feeling inadequate. Even though this is not realistic, we still have this image."*

Hart's definition about the constructed self is evidence of men and women being limited by expectations and deeply held beliefs. In the workplace, we can see some potential mental barriers and unconscious thought processes being enacted. Society's social constructions create a mental mind set of our 'role' and this silently permeates organisational systems and leadership.

How the unconscious affects our role in organisations

There are many definitions of the unconscious, but the common understanding can be traced back to Sigmund Freud, who argued that the unconscious is created as humans repress their innermost desires and private thoughts. He believed that the unconscious and culture are really two sides of the same coin, suggesting that what occurs at the surface level of organisations and systems takes into account the hidden structure and dynamics of the human psyche.[17]

Exploring how organisational culture is formed, we can understand that it's "a process of reality construction that allows people to see and to understand particular events, actions, objects, or situations in distinctive ways".[18] Simultaneously, we make decisions and assumptions about our reality based on our unconscious perceptions, using socialisation or internalised assumed knowledge. The processes which shape and structure our realities have been described by organisational psychologist Karl Weick as enactment.[19] This stresses the active role that we can unconsciously play in creating our organisations, our culture and our society.

Psychoanalysts explain that much of everyday life that is taken for granted expresses preoccupations and concerns that lie beneath the level of conscious awareness.[20] If we consider how the enactment of our socially constructed selves might be shaping the current status of women in the workforce, we can start to unlock mental barriers that might exist. Why are women underrepresented in

the leadership ranks governing our country? Why is it difficult to accept female authority? Why aren't more women promoted in their childbearing years? Why do men run corporations while women run the HR departments? Why is a man emasculated if he carries out duties around the home?

A paper called *Men, Women and Work*[21] examines the roles of gender authorisation as it affects work, motivation and the different meanings of work to men and women, including the different fears and anxieties carried by both genders.

> *"Men and women are socialised in a culture which explicitly and implicitly defines sex roles as total roles and which trains individuals in these roles. A total role is one which defines a sense of self and a set of appropriate behaviours, including level and kind of authoritativeness; it permeates all aspects of life, and takes precedence over other more situation specific work or social roles if they are compatible. Dominance and independence are linked with the masculine role, while submissiveness, passivity and nurturance are linked with the feminine. The sex-linked role conceptions are learned through socialisation, primarily within the nuclear family."* [22]

We are engendered to be men or to be women and unconsciously continue to enact a society that we have internalised. Rather than a society accepting of difference that embraces diversity. Why? Because a society that changes the status quo is too anxiety provoking to manage and therefore we become defensive and maladaptive. Evidence of this defence is the clear business case thwarted by no real change or critical mass; it's in the perverse knowledge that we know what is good for society and our economy, yet continue to fail to break through mental barriers.

The organisation as a psychic prison

A useful metaphor to think about in relation to gender equality is Morgan's idea of the 'psychic prison'. While it may seem extreme, as a concept it is powerfully poignant. It speaks to the notion that if conscious and unconscious processes, and indeed enactment, shape the very nature and culture of an organisation, people become confined by their images, ideas, thoughts and belief systems.[23] Organisations create corporate cultures that can become pathological: "Powerful visions for the future can lead to blind spots. Ways of seeing become ways of not seeing. Forces that help people and their organisations create the shared systems of meaning and negotiate their world in an orderly way, can become constraints that prevent them from acting in different ways."[24]

The 'psychic prison' metaphor provides a way to understand how our social construction and mindsets hold us back and inhibit true change. The common example used is the parallel between the organisation and the patriarchal family. This metaphor describes a patriarchal prison which is producing and reproducing organisational structures that give dominance to men and traditional male values. Many of our organisations have been typically built upon characteristics associated with the Western male values. This is still true today, as evidenced in

that only 4.3 per cent of ASX200 CEOs are women.[25] Men continue to dominate organisations, and in turn, the cultures and values that are embedded in them; while women remain in largely subordinate industries that nurture, serve and support, leading to a view of women as subordinate. Much research suggests that the relationship between gender and organisations is rooted in the patriarchal view of the dominant man or father figure.[26]

Examples of patriarchal models are visible in our government and corporate cultures daily. Male leaders are portrayed in the media surrounded by their families, the dominant father with his wife and children by his side. Tony Abbott, the current Opposition Leader, is a case in point. During his campaign to reach the female populace he posed for numerous pictures with his family. Why? To create a connection to our internalised models of authority, and our construction of ourselves. When was the last time we saw an article in the media where one of our female Ministers posed with her husband and children?

Social construction informs our belief system and we identify with what we believe to be true, almost as though we are on autopilot. A great example of this is when Prime Minister Julia Gillard attended the Annual Pacific Island Forum in Auckland in 2011: a bus driver refused to allow her onto the bus with the other leaders, assuming that as a woman she would be on the spouses' bus. [27] Is this logic, or is this predetermined socialised thinking?

"…women are socialised to be sensitive and cognisant of others feelings to provide the empathic function within the family group. They are more exposed and open, less distant from the feelings of others and are therefore pulled into the work of knowing and meeting these feelings as a primary requirement."

Ms Gillard has broken new ground as the first woman to reach the highest level of political leadership in Australia. However, as the polls[28] have shown, her rating with women is not as one might expect. Viewing this from a subconscious level, removing the obvious policy constraints and embattled party politics, the Prime Minister has experienced extreme criticism. Is she unpopular because she displays a different image from the nuclear family unit that voters identify with? Or could it be that in our minds she has played tough in the halls of parliament and exhibited what women fear most about becoming leaders, which is that they must embrace masculine traits of leadership? These are challenging questions, but there is a chance for deep learning if this is true.

Gender socialisation creates a different role for men and women, and therefore different boundaries and barriers are imposed on both. As Schactel discusses[29], women are socialised to be sensitive and cognisant of others' feelings to provide empathy within the family group. They are more exposed and open, less distant from the feelings of others and are therefore pulled into the work of knowing and meeting these feelings as a primary requirement. This is difficult for the individual woman, but it is also carried as an expectation of men and women as the female leader tries to hold and understand her own leadership role. This role is incongruent with unconscious preconceived ideas, and is often at the heart of gender issues in the workplace.

Men and women often take umbrage at other women as they try to grapple with a different leadership and authority model and, unconsciously, often lash out at the woman in question. Further evidence of this was found during the gender roundtables in CEDA's research.[30] One female respondent said:

> *"I sometimes feel fearful of women who are manipulative and yet men who behave the same are not deemed manipulative, they are deemed as influencers. Why is this so?"*

Equally, a male respondent stated:

> *"I've seen women get to senior positions and they are often harder on women coming through, certainly harder than their male counterparts. Is it because they broke through the glass ceiling and now they have to be extra critical of those trying to forge the same path? Why is it that women seem to be the harshest judges of women?"*

The psychic prison metaphor exemplifies the idea that our existing mental models and our social constructions of ourselves can trap us in our thinking and world view and, ultimately, limit the potential for greater diversity within our organisations' leadership roles.

The opportunity and potential for women is real in this changing society, but realising and embracing change takes courage and awareness from both men and women. We are burdened by the perceptions of our history and our past, but the opportunity to create and build a new world is only limited by our inability to enact the future we seek.

The future opportunity for awareness and change

Ultimately, organisations are shaped by the unconscious concerns of their members and the unconscious forces shaping the societies in which they exist. If we constructively assess our environment – be that at home within our families, in the workplace, in the current media dialogue or the sexualisation of women across the world – we see the equilibrium for which business is striving is far from being realised. However, where there is a challenge, there is an opportunity.

In this paper, several examples of psychoanalytical frameworks that provide tools to consider the gender equity paradox have been presented. From our earliest days, we are engendered to be male or female, and this manifests in our perception of the world and our place in it. Through enactment, we can limit the potential of our organisations and the 'psychic prison' offers an imagined framework for considering the patterns we are trapped in.

Armed with this knowledge, there is an opportunity and a level of responsibility for, both men and woman, to use these tools constructively to challenge their own status quo. Don't be afraid to unpack these methodologies and ask some of the following questions:

1. What does your own social construction look like?
2. What mental models might you have internalised that you carry unconsciously?
3. How does your past inform your current situation and future?
4. What role do I really want to have in the home or at work and how might I achieve this?
5. Do I respond differently to male and female authority and why?
6. How can I start to shape the kind of societal cultures that are more equitable for generations to come?

Through consciously reflecting on and acknowledging our maladaptive cultures and the barriers to success, we can develop a different social construction and, over generations, enact a new culture in our lives and our organisations. It will take courage to pursue the critical conversations needed in our organisations. This is difficult but possible.

Morgan (2006) said:

> *"In recognising that we accomplish or enact our reality of the everyday world, we have a powerful way to think about culture. It means that we must attempt to understand culture as an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction. This brings the whole phenomenon of culture alive. When understood in this way, culture can no longer just be viewed as a simple variable that societies or organisations possess or that leaders bring to the organisation. Rather, it must be understood as an active, living phenomenon through which people jointly create and recreate the worlds in which they live."* [31]

The opportunity for change is a multi-generational movement, not a singular, top-down male or female leadership torch to be handed along. While we consider its merits, we must provide a safe place within our families and our organisations to discuss and enact what is felt, rather than what we think we should say or how we think we should act. Building a culture of diverse leadership will enact a more prosperous nation and will enable a new paradigm to emerge.

Endnotes

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8. Diversity and gender: Realities for growth in the global economy

Dr Hannah Piterman

This chapter explores key barriers for women in leadership including the vilification of women in the media and the poorly understood business case for diversity in workplaces.

Hannah Piterman is an adviser and coach to senior management and boards in the areas of board performance, leadership development, and gender diversity to an eclectic client base in the public, private and not for profit sectors. Hannah publishes in the areas of governance, leadership and diversity and contributes to public debate in academic journals, the print media and as a presenter at business forums in Australia and internationally.

She maintains academic links through her appointment as an adjunct Associate Professor at Monash University, Melbourne.

She is a co-founder of Gender Worx. Hannah is also a member of advisory committees of not for profit organisations including CEDA's Victoria/Tasmania State Advisory Council.

Hannah is a strong advocate for gender diversity and the benefits that flow from its achievement. Her commitment led her to conduct the acclaimed two-year research sponsored by big business, government and academic organisations culminating in her book *Unlocking Gender Potential; A Leader's Handbook* launched by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) in 2010.

In the wake of the 2012 US election, and confronted by the reality of a seismic shift in America's demography, Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly made a statement on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart that went viral: "The white establishment is now a minority ... Obama has won because it's not a traditional America anymore." However unvarnished, O'Reilly's comments reflect an entrenched belief about who is entitled to a seat at the leadership table, one that is being increasingly threatened. As analyst and social commentator Rich Benjamin opines: "Like whiteness itself, once stable, reliable institutions are perceived to be 'broken', the nuclear family, the classroom, the 'border', the economy and the very nature of work."[1]

Significant shifts are taking place in our institutions and organisations. The forces of globalisation are shifting the nature of work and recalibrating the nature of leadership. The leaders of tomorrow will come from the under-represented demographics of today[2] to meet what Cisco's Wim Elfrink calls "the fourth phase of globalisation, the globalisation of the corporate brain, which will overturn many traditional attitudes about workers, working, and the workplace".[3]

As Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO of General Electric, commented: "The Jack Welch of the future cannot be like me. I spent my entire career in the United States. The next head of General Electric will be somebody who spent time in Bombay, in Hong Kong, in Buenos Aires."[4]

The new breed of leader is cross-culturally attuned, agile, comfortable with uncertainty and receptive to new ideas. She or he is adept at engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and can draw on different intelligences irrespective of how they are packaged – man or woman, black, white or any other shade, creed or religion.

Yet despite this understanding, a deep inertia stifles progress. An Ernst & Young report, based on a major globalisation survey, reveals that the boards of many global companies do not embody the diversity that these companies will need in the future.[5] Australia's leadership in ASX companies and other major centres of power remains homogenous, unable to open up its ranks to create a more heterogeneous leadership presence that reflects Australia's diversity. Monolingual, masculine and white: this culture has managed to reproduce itself despite a rhetoric supporting greater diversity in leadership.

A 2012 *The Age* survey[6] reveals that the leaders of Australia's fifty largest companies are remarkably similar in background, education and gender, with only two women in CEO roles across those companies. Women represent only three per cent of CEOs, 2.5 per cent of board chairs, 14 per cent of board seats and eight per cent of executive management roles and hold just seven per cent of top earner positions in companies on the ASX. Representation of women in senior executive positions within ASX companies has not exceeded 13 per cent for the last decade. The boards of 64 companies of the ASX200 are still all male.

"Australia's leadership profile in ASX companies and other major centres of power remain homogenous, unable to open up their ranks to create a more heterogeneous leadership presence that reflects Australia's cultural and gender diversity. Monolingual, masculine and white this culture has managed to reproduce itself despite a rhetoric, which supports greater diversity in leadership."

Australia is not alone. Herminia Ibarra, INSEAD's Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Faculty Director of the school's Leadership Initiative, says, "the old boy network is alive and well, despite all this talk of diversity and corporate change".[7]

Women represent one of the world's biggest and most under-reported opportunities as a growth market. The gender shift has been building in the global workforce, particularly in the United States and Europe, with women's economic empowerment arguably the biggest social change of our times.[8] Women globally controlled approximately $20 trillion in annual consumer spending in 2009, a figure forecast to climb to $28 trillion by 2015. US research suggests that women make 80 per cent of consumer purchasing decisions.[9] Their buying power is increasing worldwide, according to a Goldman Sachs report. More women than men are starting American companies and women earn six in 10 bachelor and master degrees.[10]

Unfortunately, "many executives in business around the world are uninformed about the shifts taking place in labour force participation, such as the decline of

prime age US men in work to just over 80 per cent from 95 per cent in the 1960s. They either don't know or ignore the fact that women are estimated to represent a growth market twice as big as India and China combined".[11]

Homogeneity is a strategic risk. It enhances the propensity for groupthink and leads to poor decision-making, often blinding us to the opportunities under our noses. Australian business is yet to reap the benefits of the gender and cultural diversity in its midst.

Australia's engagement with Asia is a major case in point. The recent *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper[12] reiterates a perennial concern regarding Australia's failure to tap into the opportunities afforded by its strategic location. Australian business is yet to develop the appropriate cultural capital to engage with the Asian region. As far back as 1995, David Karpin raised many of the same issues in the report *Enterprising Nation*[13], highlighting a lack of diversity, poor skills in languages other than English, and limited understanding of foreign business cultures and the management of ethical dilemmas in other cultural contexts.[14]

Australia is a diverse nation with an equally diverse talent pool. It has an abundance of the skills required to engage with the opportunities that globalisation and the Asian Century afford. At a time when productivity challenges and a shortage of skilled executive talent constitute a risk to future competitiveness, Australian business can ill afford to ignore the breadth of its talent pool. In respect of its female labour force, Australia ranks poorly in its capacity to translate investment in education into economic participation and political empowerment. Australia's ranking internationally, as reported in the *Global Gender Gap Report*[15], has been steadily declining since the report was first published in 2006.

While the issue of diversity and inclusion is increasingly becoming a board agenda item, progress at the top has been glacial. In the remainder of this paper I highlight four key reasons for failure to make progress.

Key barriers to women's progress in leadership

Barrier 1: Corporate reputation is not contingent on engagement with diversity

Business seems to have a social licence to operate irrespective of commitment to diversity. While reputational capital is acknowledged as a major strategic asset, most companies underinvest in corporate citizenship efforts – including investment in diversity – and their citizenship ratings lag significantly behind their ratings on other basic performance attributes such as quality and innovation.[16] While poor reputation may make it difficult to build strong brands, a good reputation is no guarantee of success.[17]

A 2012 Heidrick[18] survey of board directors found that in Australia and New Zealand most men and women agree (70 per cent and 69 per cent respectively) that increasing board diversity enhances trust in corporate boards. However,

companies like Toll, Leighton Holdings and, until recently, Fortescue Minerals, that have no women on their boards, have done extremely well in terms of share price capitalisation. It is unlikely that short-term share price fluctuations have anything to do with shareholder concern about the lack of diversity at board level.

Barrier 2: The business case for gender diversity is poorly understood

The business case for women in leadership is often poorly understood and a meaningful segment of the business community remains unconvinced. According to Deloitte[19], there appears to be more rhetoric and head nodding than action. Business has not joined the dots between diversity and performance. A 2013 Bain and Chief Executive Women report[20] found that good intentions have not translated into better perceptions of companies' commitment to acting on gender issues. Four in 10 companies do not have policies or targets in place to tackle gender diversity. A 2013 report by law firm King & Wood Mallesons found that just 13 per cent of directors regard diversity as a key priority, compared to 63 per cent the previous year. According to the authors, directors believe that the diversity issue has been adequately dealt with.[21]

There remains a lingering mindset that efforts to increase women's representation must come at a cost to merit. *The Australian* conducted a 2012 analysis of 23 randomly selected annual reports[22] that indicated companies that have failed to comply with the ASX corporate guidelines cite operational pressures and strategic undertakings such as mergers and acquisition as the reason. It seems some Australian businesses are failing to connect diversity with strategic talent management.

Managing for success in today's business environment is a complex endeavour, requiring excellence on all dimensions of a business scorecard. Business can ill afford to put talent management strategies on hold and ignore the pool of talented female candidates.[23]

The business case for women in leadership is clear. Studies indicate that when there is a critical mass of women on boards (more than three women), improvements are reported in ethical practice and accountability, transparency, board unity and scrutiny, particularly around CEO packages (McKinsey[24], Catalyst[25] and Genderworx[26]).

However, there is a risk in framing the diversity agenda in narrow economic terms only. First, the case for diversity is vulnerable to the vagaries of economic cycles. When the economy suffers, diversity initiatives, like other long-term investments, can be put on hold, as they were during the global financial crisis (GFC). According to the Australia Institute[27], women across all socioeconomic strata bore the brunt of the financial crisis. Australian companies chose a path of least resistance as gender diversity initiatives took a step backwards. According to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Australia (EOWA) – now called the Workplace Gender Equality Agency – Census of Women in Leadership 2008[28], the number of women in board director roles in the ASX200 had dropped to their lowest levels since the agency began collecting data in 2002. Australia fell behind

the US, Canada, Britain and South Africa on all metrics of gender equity. Australia was not alone in poor performance. In the US, the number of discrimination complaints by women to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission climbed significantly during the recession in 2008 and 2009.[29]

Second, attempting to establish a narrow causal relationship between the number of women on boards and profitability is not necessarily consistent with a robust business case. While there is a correlation between better performance and the number of women on boards, establishing causality between women and profitability remains a challenge given the paucity of women at the top. Norwegian studies[30] indicate stock value and profitability decline, while the McKinsey[31] and Catalyst[32] studies show companies with a critical mass of female directors outperform all-male boards. This has led some to argue that the business case for women on boards is yet to be established, supporting a case for maintaining the status quo.

"As long as the link between women and authority and between men and family responsibility remains fragile, women will continue to be marginalised in the workplace."

Finally, a narrow business case can subsume the important ethical case for gender diversity. At its core, the case for diversity is the case for civil society. Australia is signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements that uphold equal opportunity. There is no civil economy without a civil society. As commentator Ian Harper has said, modern economics is detached from moral foundations: "Stripped of a framework of morality, a narrow business case will call forth perversions of justice and humanity."[33] In today's global economy, we have learnt the consequences of putting ethics and intellect on hold while self-interest, grandiosity and greed take centre stage, as they did prior to the GFC.

Barrier 3: Leadership remains a male paradigm

The concept of leadership remains a male paradigm. Despite the call for a new breed of leader, the alignment of leadership and masculinity continues to be deeply embedded in the collective psyche of society and organisations.[34] The corollary of this is that the domestic sphere is the domain of the feminine. As long as the link between women and authority and between men and family responsibility remains fragile, women will continue to be marginalised in the workplace.

Researchers refer to the notion of 'majority advantage' to explain a phenomenon which sees unearned privileges such as natural mentoring, contacts, high-value opportunities and, above all, trust automatically bestowed on men. A culture of male entitlement sees a repudiation of those not like 'us' as imposters. Study after study finds that the exclusion of women from higher paying positions with higher promotional opportunities is based on discriminatory decisions founded on unexamined stereotypical assumptions.

A 2013 report by Bain suggests that there has been a decline in perceptions that the playing field is level for women, with only 15 per cent of women believing that they have equal opportunity compared with 20 per cent in 2012.

Some 20 years ago, Peter Senge commented in his seminal research on the learning organisation, *The Fifth Discipline,* that "our prevailing leadership myths are still captured by the image of the captain of the cavalry leading the charge to rescue the settlers from the attacking Indians".[35] A perusal of the literature on the CEO of the future suggests masculine imagery, in the main, continues to define leadership. This is evident in descriptors of CEOs in reports by Fortune 500, Hay Group, IBM and Korn Ferry that include: "hungry for change", "wildly imaginative", "disruptive by nature", "totally wired to the people", "tough", "the new adventurer", "bold enough to challenge the status quo", "loves the challenge", "the tougher it gets, the more he likes it", "helmsman", "captain of a ship", "eager and fearless young entrepreneur, who could very well arrive on a skateboard", "young Turk", "brash and driven", "corporate saviour".

While many of these traits may raise a man's status in masculine cultures such as Australia and the US, where competitiveness, assertiveness and ambition are valued[36], they are likely to make a woman less acceptable.

Women who are seen to negotiate hard and self-advocate are likely to face a backlash. Yet if they are collaborative and communal they are often viewed as weak – the classic double bind.[37] Experiments by Harvard University's Hannah Riley Bowles and colleagues found women are treated more harshly than men when they initiate negotiations for higher pay.[38]

A study undertaken at Columbia Business School[39] asked students to appraise the CV of two entrepreneurs, Howard Roizen and Heidi Roizen. They are one and the same person, the only difference being the name change on the CV.

Howard Roizen has worked for Apple, launched his own software company and been a partner at a venture capital firm. He is outgoing, an incredible networker (Bill Gates is a personal friend), and described by colleagues as a "catalyst" and a "captain of industry". The students judged him to be effective, likeable and someone they would hire.

"Women who are seen to negotiate hard and self-advocate are likely to face a backlash. Yet, if they are collaborative and communal they are often viewed as weak – the classic double bind."

Although the students judged Heidi Roizen to be as competent and effective as Howard, they didn't like her, they wouldn't hire her and they wouldn't want to work with her. They were much tougher on Heidi than on Howard. As gender researchers predicted, the response to Heidi was driven by how much they dis-liked Heidi's aggressive personality. The more assertive they considered Heidi, the more harshly they judged her.

According to a 2011 report by Bain, *What stops women from reaching the top? Confronting the tough questions*[40], women's 'style' is a barrier. Men in senior roles are more likely to appoint or promote someone with a style similar to their own. Eighty per cent of women believe that women's collaborative style is less valued than men's self-promoting style. Sadly, women were even more likely than men to downplay their leadership attributes and rank men more highly. When it comes

to the two top leadership attributes, problem solving and influencing, women were 16 and 40 per cent less likely to rate themselves as being highly competent as men, and men were twice as likely to rank men over women. Women across the globe report similarly. Research by Europe's Institute of Leadership and Management[41] reveals that women report lower confidence in regard to their careers than men, with half the female managers who responded admitting to self-doubt about their performance and career as compared to 31 per cent of men. Women are also less likely to get the sponsorship that leads to jobs.[42]

The undervaluing of collaborative styles is a serious concern in light of the findings of the Asian Century white paper. As Giam Swiegers, CEO of Deloitte Australia, points out, "If Australia is going to ride the growth wave coming out of Asia, there will be an even bigger demand for top talent. Without organisations getting a better understanding of gender diversity, we are just not going to have the right workforce and skills in place to make the most of the opportunities the next decade is going to offer us."[43]

Barrier 4: Vilification of women

The fourth reason for the lack of gender diversity is the vilification of women and their exclusion from decision-making power. While we readily point the finger at societies in which women's minority status is enshrined in culture, law and religion, in Australia (as in many parts of the western world), women's place in the workplace has only recently emerged from being almost exclusively in support of and subordinate to men. Attitudes take time to shift, and there remains a deep legacy of conscious and unconscious bias against women who step outside the domestic sphere, particularly those who aspire for leadership positions. Says Rachida Dati, former Minister of Justice in the Sarkozy government and mayor of the seventh *arrondissement*: "Being ambitious for a woman means being a schemer. Being ambitious for a man is about excellence. Men try to 'convince', while we are said to 'seduce'."[44]

"While we readily point the finger at societies in which women's minority status is enshrined in culture, law and religion, in Australia (as in many parts of the western world), women's place in the workplace is only recently emerging from being almost exclusively in support of and subordinate to men."

Women are vulnerable to inappropriate scrutiny about what they do, what they say and what they wear. It is difficult for men and women alike to see past gender when women take on leadership roles. High-profile women, in particular, are targeted not only for their performance, which is judged on a higher and less stable standard, but also for their appearance and their identity as women.

The vilification of Prime Minister Julia Gillard has been palpable in the verbal abuse meted out by commentators and politicians: "ditch the witch", "a menopausal monster", "a lying cow", "a horrible mouth on legs" and "political slut". If she was the chief executive of a public company, she would be protected against vile and misogynist assaults in the media and online, says author and commentator Anne Summers.[45]

Gillard's toughness is railed against, for example, by Amanda Vanstone with her moniker 'Cruella de Gillard'. Her integrity is questioned in a way a man's wouldn't be, as is her status as single and childless – "deliberately barren" according to Senator Bill Heffernan. This is not to mention her choice in clothes or the size of her posterior, which seems to have taken up inordinate media time after Germaine Greer cried out on ABC's Q&A on 24 March, 2012, "You have a big arse, Julia. Just get on with it".

Sexism is often shrouded in comic levity – defended as 'just joking' – which makes the trivialisation, marginalisation and sexualisation of women more difficult to confront. In relation to Gillard, strategist and commentator Grahame Morris defended his tweet saying "they ought to kick her to death" as "just a quip". Alan Jones said it was "black humour", when criticised for saying that Gillard's father "died of shame".

"The business case for diversity has been well established. What gets in the way is blindness, inertia and short-termism. Leaders must step up. Whatever has been done so far has not been sufficient."

Prime Minister Gillard has not been the only victim of abuse just for being a woman. In an interview with ABC commentator Leigh Sales, Grahame Morris commented, "sometimes when she's doing her interviews Leigh can be a real cow". Today, one in five Australian women experience sexual harassment (as do one in 20 men). The true magnitude of worldwide violence against women still goes largely unreported.

A study by CEDA[47] found that, despite organisational commitment to increase the number of women in senior positions, dynamics both conscious and unconscious perpetuate a situation that sees men at the helm. Antagonistic cultures, benign paternalism, and conscious and unconscious bias can see women internalise the culture of male advantage and male entitlement and feel like imposters. The imposter syndrome is hard to cure when there are so few female role models and when women have to prove their worth every step of the way.

The case for leadership now

Australia has a way to go to become a more mature and integrated society, in which men and women are equal partners in a more culturally literate society. A stepping up of leadership is required in all spheres of public and private life. In a fast-paced, short-term results oriented world, where ends justify means, the dominant transformational leadership paradigm does not always deliver ethical outcomes. Ethical business is good business. It underpins a civil and sustainable economy in which equal opportunity sees excellence rewarded, irrespective of how it is packaged.

The business case for diversity has been well established. What gets in the way is blindness, inertia and short-term attitudes. Leaders must step up. Whatever has been done so far has not been sufficient. They must act now.

First, leaders have an opportunity, and indeed a duty, to rethink what progress really means and to build stronger and more inclusive visions for the future of

organisations and societies. Leaders, particularly in ASX companies and in government, have wide-reaching influence extending beyond the boundaries of their organisations – they need to be champions of change advocating ethical practice that ensures equal opportunity for all. No leader can be a bystander.

Second, leaders need to be accountable for culture change by ensuring systems of merit. To do this they must address conscious and unconscious biases that influence perception, judgement and behaviour around what constitutes merit. And they need to measure and monitor to ensure progress.

Third, leaders need to expand their repertoire of skills and recruit and develop for a new and diverse leadership presence adept at exercising soft power and gentle persuasion.

Fourth, leaders need to stop asking what's wrong with women that they're not making it to the top, and start asking what's wrong with companies if they can't retain and promote educated women.

Fifth, leaders need to challenge stereotypical assumptions around what it means to be a man or a woman in society, and provide support for men and women to partner in the workplace and the domestic sphere.

Sixth, leaders must take responsibility for the depiction of women in the media and under their watch. They need to be mindful of reinforcing the dark side of the social unconscious that portrays women in a diminished and stereotypical way, even though it may be masked in humour. Disrespect towards women is the root of violence against women, a shameful blight on Australian civil society.

And finally I'd like to quote Charles Hampden-Turner:

"We do not promote women only because they have achieved. Rather, we promote them and therefore they achieve. Top management, the definers, have in their power the self-fulfilling prophecy. If they define women as being equal then equal they will become. The value has to precede the achievement."[48]

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Case Study 1

How an onsite childcare centre supports CSL's female workforce

Prologue

CSL Media Release: 6 September 2011

CSL Limited and Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS) today proudly opened the Thinking Kids Children's Centre, an early childhood education and care centre at CSL's Parkville site in Victoria.

The purpose-built, architecturally designed centre represents a $4.8m investment by CSL and will offer 114 places for children aged up to six years. CSL employees will receive priority access with places also available to the wider community.

This exciting milestone is the culmination of extensive work undertaken over a five-year period by CSL's Childcare Centre Steering Committee, CSL's Capital Works group and CSL's chosen service provider, ECMS.

Why CSL ventured into the uncharted waters of childcare facility development

CSL recognises that a diverse workforce is critical to maintaining a competitive advantage. This is especially true in the biopharmaceutical sector, where the requirements for technical skills are high and global competition for those skills is increasingly fierce.

In 2006, CSL found that 63 per cent of the 107 women in its workforce who had taken maternity leave over the five years from 2001 to 2006 were no longer with the company. As a large proportion of CSL staff members are women – currently 52 per cent – and a high number of women are in management (55 per cent) and sales (68 per cent), poor maternity leave retention could affect the balance of skills in the company's workforce and add substantial costs to the business. Research showed that similar organisations that provided work-based childcare retained more women, particularly in middle management and senior positions.[1]

In response to this data, CSL surveyed employees on maternity leave to understand the reasons they were not returning to work. The survey found that access to suitable childcare was the major barrier. In 2006, there were 700 families on waiting lists for childcare places in the City of Melbourne council area. In the surrounding municipalities of Moreland, Moonee Valley and Yarra City, childcare demand far exceeded supply. All centres had long waiting periods, especially for the placement of babies and children under three.[2]

At the same time (and equally applicable in 2013), it was reported that Melbourne had Australia's fastest growing childcare fees, with day care charges increasing by 125 per cent over an 11-year period.[3]

With limited access to places and the cost of childcare rising, many parents experience difficulty in finding the support needed to balance their careers with child rearing responsibilities. As a result, many leave employment to care for their children. Independent research has also indicated that both the cost and the low availability of suitable childcare are the two main reasons why women with young children find it hard to return to work.[4]

CSL recognised that childcare was outside of its core business and expertise, and as such engaged experts to undertake the research required to ensure the childcare centre had a feasible business case. Complete Childcare Services (CCS) was appointed to provide consulting and risk management expertise during the assessment of CSL's childcare centre solution.

The feasibility study undertook internal and external research, including surveys, focus groups, desk research and literature reviews, to determine whether a work-based childcare centre would:

- Experience adequate demand
- Strengthen maternity leave retention; and
- Enhance CSL's offering to potential new employees.

An employee survey was released to all Victoria-based employees to obtain an indicator of demand. With a 31 per cent response rate (411 participants), CSL determined that there was a strong desire for childcare located in close proximity to the workplace. The survey highlighted particular demand for places for children aged under three years. Of note was that participants regarded quality and accessibility as more important than affordability and flexibility. Responses included: "I would need to be assured of quality before I took up childcare at CSL" and "Please ensure an appropriate provider with high-quality services is chosen".

CSL also surveyed former employees who were on maternity leave when they left the company. The response rate of 34 per cent (21 participants) was a pleasing result. Eighty-six per cent of respondents indicated that they may not have left CSL if there was an onsite childcare centre with the opportunity to salary sacrifice childcare fees. Responses included: "Probably would have returned to work full-time if there was onsite childcare available" and "A fully trained accredited facility is a must, with fully trained staff".

As a result of the feasibility study, CCS proposed that a work-based childcare centre could improve CSL's maternity leave retention rates from 37 per cent in 2006 to a target of 80 per cent.

Given the sound business reasons presented by the feasibility study, the CSL Board and CEO, Dr Brian McNamee, decided to develop an onsite childcare facility at its Parkville site.

Childcare centre project – how it all came together

CSL appointed an architect with extensive experience in childcare centre design to create a high-quality building with environmentally sustainable design features. Design requirements included a significant outdoor area for children to enjoy, surrounded by grass, plants and natural sunlight. The centre's construction materials were environmentally sound, and reflected CSL's corporate responsibility principle to contribute to the environmental wellbeing of the community. Construction began in December 2010 and was completed in September 2011.

The location for the childcare centre was, at the time it was decided on, used as a car park for employees and contractors. CSL applied to the City of Melbourne for planning permission to construct a multi-storey replacement car park elsewhere on the Parkville site. The planning permit process presented some challenges and was finally resolved through a successful Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) appeal. During this time, the childcare project was put on hold and could easily have been placed in the 'too-hard' basket. The continuous and strong support of CSL's management, who recognised the long term benefits for the business, kept the childcare centre project alive.

With the continued support of CCS, CSL embarked on a rigorous process to identify a partner to help deliver the outcomes desired for the childcare centre project. Not-for-profit organisation Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS) was appointed as the Centre's service provider because of a shared commitment to providing quality service and a strong track record of delivering on that commitment.

To ensure CSL complied with the required standards, CSL approached the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) at the start of the project for its licensing authority and expertise. The Department was invited to site visits prior to construction and just before completion. The DEECD's feedback throughout the project was invaluable in helping build the best childcare centre possible.

An internal project team comprising engineering and capital works, HR, communications, legal and finance staff – supported by CCS – was deeply committed to the project and worked hard to ensure the centre delivered on its objectives.

With a project approved, a service provider identified and a fantastic design developed, the last step was to select a name for the centre. An inclusive process using both internal and external creative inputs developed the name 'Thinking Kids', which reflected CSL's scientific foundations, the aspirations of parents and the level of quality that the centre would offer.

Thinking Kids Children's Centre – The story today

The Thinking Kids Children's Centre caters for 114 long–day care places for children aged up to six, including a kindergarten program for children aged three to four. The centre's design is flexible and includes three babies rooms, two toddler rooms and two kinder rooms. ECMS staff can adjust the rooms according to demand and movable walls between the toddler and kinder rooms create flexibility to open the rooms and create larger areas for the children.

With construction complete, a management committee governs the relationship between CSL and ECMS. The committee meets regularly to discuss performance and operational requirements. This committee ensures the centre continues to operate at the highest quality levels and meets all regulations, and is planning ahead to meet future requirements.

As at March 2013, the centre is at 85 per cent capacity, with 182 children from 167 families enrolled. This is well ahead of the utilisation levels projected at the start of the project.

Maternity leave retention has also improved. CSL's maternity leave return rate now sits at 90 per cent, while resignations in the three months following return from maternity leave are at just 1.9 per cent.

An interesting statistic is that 33 per cent of users of the centre are male employees, which shows that the benefits of readily available childcare can flow to all employees, regardless of gender.

Community contribution

CSL recognised that finding high-quality, convenient childcare was not just a challenge for those employed by CSL. Because there was plenty of land available, the architects were instructed to maximise the number of places that could be made available within the same cost. This would cater for future demand from CSL employees and provide assistance to local businesses and families. While CSL employees receive priority access, families in the local community can use the centre if space permits.

CSL support for families is more than just building a childcare centre

CSL's commitment to retaining a greater number of its female employees with young families extends beyond the childcare centre initiative. Mothers are supported right through maternity leave and upon return to work with 52 weeks parental leave and the option to apply for an extension for up to an additional 52 weeks. During this time, mothers are provided with 13 weeks paid maternity leave, in addition to Australia's national Paid Parental Leave scheme. CSL also provides 10 days paid paternity leave to fathers.

CSL also supports new parents with flexible working conditions such as part-time work and job sharing. This approach is communicated to employees in CSL's Flexible Work Practices policy. Women can return to work following maternity leave on a part-time basis until their child is of school age, or they have the opportunity to work from home, based on operational requirements. Of the 31 women who returned to work from maternity leave between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, 21 resumed in part-time positions.

Upon return to work, CSL has facilities available at both of its sites for women to express and store milk at work. In addition, CSL supports lactation breaks for mothers who wish to breastfeed their child at the childcare centre.

Epilogue

CSL media release: 9 November 2011

CSL wins equal opportunity award for onsite childcare centre

CSL Limited has been recognised as one of Australia's most outstanding equal opportunity employers by the Federal Government for its work in establishing an innovative onsite childcare centre at its corporate headquarters in Melbourne.

The company today received the Minister's Award for Outstanding Equal Employment Opportunity Initiative for its recently opened Thinking Kids Children's Centre, a purpose-built, architecturally designed facility offering 114 places for children aged up to six years located at its Parkville, Melbourne site.

The annual award, presented by Federal Minister for the Status of Women, Kate Ellis, at a luncheon in Sydney, recognises organisations that implement outstanding strategic initiatives aimed at effectively addressing issues related to equal employment opportunity for women.

The centre, which opened on September 19, provides priority access to CSL employees, with places also available to the wider community.

CSL Biotherapies Executive Vice President Dr Jeff Davies, accepting the award on behalf of CSL, said women represented 51 per cent of CSL's Australian workforce and brought enormous value to the business.

"We know that to continue to attract and retain talented women, we must provide a supportive and inclusive workplace and minimise the barriers to career progression," Dr Davies said.

CSL's work to establish the centre started over five years ago when internal research indicated that an onsite childcare facility would strengthen maternity leave retention and enhance the company's offering to potential new employees.

Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency Director (EOWA) Helen Conway today congratulated CSL for providing the $4.8 million childcare centre.

"This facility is a boon to employees who may have had to postpone their careers once they became caregivers due to a lack of access to adequate childcare. CSL and its people will continue to gain from this important investment," Ms Conway said.

The facility has proven extremely popular among CSL's workforce in the months since its opening. Early Childhood Management Services, which CSL appointed to run the centre, reports that 63 children of company employees are registered for places this year.

"We are proud to have been able to create a state-of-the-art childcare centre at our Parkville site. The response and uptake has been fantastic and gives us confidence that we are headed in the right direction in allowing our talented female workforce every opportunity to have fulfilling careers," Dr Davies said.

Comments from CSL management and employees

As an employee of CSL, being part of an organisation that places an importance on work–life balance and support for women in the workforce is very reassuring. It was a significant benefit to my husband and I that we not only had two full-time childcare places available and close to work, but also that when we walked into the centre it was the nicest, warmest centre we had been in. The wooden toys, the homely touches, it is really lovely. We looked at a number of other centres, and this was by far the best. Queenie and Matilda were here full-time from the first week of opening and they haven't had a day off, which indicates to me that they are very happy here. We love it. I think the transition has been smooth because I'm not worried or stressed about getting here or being available in the case of an emergency, which is psychologically important for me. The girls know that I work next door to their 'school'. I have the opportunity to be here straight after work and not have to account for travel time. Also knowing that so many stakeholders, like CSL and ECMS, have a lot of interest in making this a success is quite comforting.

– Claire Rosel, Senior HR Business Partner

Coming to work, I travel one to one and a half hours on a good day. It has been very difficult to find a childcare centre that opens early enough and closes late enough for me to be able to drop my son off in the morning and be able to do a full day at work and then pick him up in time. With Monash Freeway always congested, it is very hard to predict how long the drive home takes. I was very happy when I heard that CSL was building a childcare centre on its premises. I expressed my interest straightaway. With the centre being right here at work, I don't have to worry that I will not be able to pick up my son in time, or about getting penalised for picking him up after closing time. I don't have to rely on other people to pick him up for me or find different babysitters at the last minute. I don't have to tell my manager, sorry can't stay back again today. For me, Thinking Kids Children's Centre has saved me from endless worry and stress.

– Daniela Mocanu, Clinical Manufacturing Officer

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Case Study 2

TNT Women in Transport campaign

About the organisation

TNT Express is one of the world's leading providers of business-to-business express delivery services. Given that the global business began as an Australian company, TNT is a household name and recognised as a reliable, customer-focused and socially responsible organisation. TNT Australia employs over 5000 people across more than 50 sites around the country, moving around 750,000 items of freight each week. As an 'investor in people', the company is dedicated to offering a positive and vibrant working environment while providing employees with training that will unlock their full potential and create pathways for career advancement. And as a 'Top Employer' accredited by the CRF Institute, TNT Australia offers employment conditions and support to staff that have been recognised as best in class by global standards.

Background

The Women in Transport project is an ongoing initiative by the TNT Australia HR team to fundamentally change the demographics of frontline operations staff across the national business. It began in April 2012 as a targeted diversity campaign aimed at doubling the number of female drivers and dockhands in the business before the end of the fourth quarter of the 2012–13 financial year. However, it has already been developed into an ongoing process of recruiting more women into frontline roles and supporting this with cultural change initiatives to make TNT Australia's depot-level operations a community recognised career option for women. The Women in Transport project complements TNT Australia's gender diversity policies, which include mentoring, flexible working hours and maternity leave, in the context of a broader diversity agenda.

Program profile

The nature and structure of the Australian economy over the last several years has posed some unique challenges for recruitment professionals in the transport sector. The relatively strong economy has seen a consistent need for key frontline operational staff, with drivers and dockhands in demand across most sites, particularly in metropolitan areas. However, strong competition from the booming mining and resources sector has seen some areas suffer from a shortage of labour, particularly in Western Australia, parts of Queensland and the Northern Territory. Previous success in meeting this demand by targeting female candidates sparked the idea of making this a permanent part of TNT Australia's national recruitment strategy – and the Women in Transport project was born.

While women make up 19 per cent of TNT's employees overall, most work in more 'traditional' roles such as customer service, administration, support, sales and management. The Women in Transport project was aimed specifically at addressing the fact that only 2.28 per cent of our vehicle drivers and 2.88 per cent of the company's dockhands were female. TNT recognised that increasing the number of women in these frontline operational roles would have a number of clear business benefits:

1. Labour market benefits – By casting the net wider and actively encouraging more women to apply for driver and dockhand roles, TNT Australia would increase its candidate pool and gain access to a broader range of potential employees. This would not only benefit the business in areas with a smaller pool of potential candidates, such as regional areas with smaller populations and areas with strong competition for labour from the resources sector, but also set TNT apart from its transport sector competitors.
2. Internal cultural benefits – By changing the demographics of operational staff in its depots, TNT Australia saw the benefit of bringing its operations more in line with modern, diverse and gender-equal workforces across the country, with genuine benefits for the culture, morale, outlook and focus of the staff in these depots overall.
3. Customer focus benefits – A more gender-equal operational workforce was seen as better reflecting the company's customers – the people operations staff interact with every day. TNT saw that having more women dealing directly with customers as their regular pick-up and delivery (PUD) point-of-contact with TNT could only help with customer orientation. The company thought this would help foster an empathetic, outward-looking, customer-focused organisational culture overall.

Implementation

The objective for the Women in Transport project for 2012 was to double the number of female drivers and dockhands by the end of the fourth quarter of the 2012–13 financial year. TNT recognised this was an ambitious target that would require both a targeted recruitment campaign and internal cultural change and support. The project was divided into three phases over the course of the year.

Phase One: Planning

The first step was establishing TNT's unique Employer Value Proposition (EVP) for women: what did women in driving and dockhand roles genuinely like about working at TNT? To do this, TNT interviewed current female frontline staff and asked them what kind of work they had done previously, how they found out about their role at TNT, why they decided to apply and what they enjoyed about

'Swap' campaign – Animated tile ad

'Swap' campaign – Animated banner ad

working for the organisation. Their answers were used to help shape the campaign and they were compiled into two videos called 'Love the Job': one longer video for internal use and a shorter one to support the recruitment campaign externally.

The organisation then worked with advertising and PR agencies, as well as its internal marketing and communications functions, to develop a campaign that communicated the benefits of working at TNT to a targeted audience of women. The key EVP benefits identified were:

1. Remuneration – Many female operational employees noted that the remuneration they could earn as a driver or dockhand at TNT was superior to what they could receive in many other traditionally female employment opportunities, such as in hospitality, clerical work or caring roles.

2. Regular hours – Compared to work in traditional roles, many female drivers and dockhands found the hours suited their lifestyles. They liked that the hours were regular and known in advance, allowing them to plan their family time and organise their lives. The fact that the work did not require them to do night shifts or work on weekends added to the attractiveness of this work–life balance.

3. Career opportunities – That TNT was a large, stable, household-name brand was also attractive to many female employees. They also liked the fact they were encouraged to apply for internal roles, were given training and could advance their careers.

The campaign was developed to reflect and communicate these benefits and to target women who could be classified as underemployed. That is, women working irregular hours, working weekends and night shifts or in industries experiencing an economic downturn such as retail and hospitality.

The theme of the campaign was 'Swap your job for a career with real rewards' and it was aimed at getting women to swap their traditionally female role for a new career at TNT Express, with emphasis on the freedom and customer interaction in TNT frontline roles.

Phase Two: Execution

The campaign launched in April 2012, running as banner and tile advertisements on Facebook and CareerOne, one of the leading Australian job boards. The online strategy deliberately targeted people who were not looking for driving, transport or logistics roles, with ads served on parts of the sites where women were likely to be looking for roles in administration, hospitality, healthcare and retail.

Clicking on the animated online ads took potential candidates to a simple expression of interest form that asked for basic contact details. The TNT Australia Recruitment Team then responded to all applicants with a phone call and a simple screening interview.

Phase Three: Support and follow up

Ensuring that the campaign had suitable support within the business was essential to its success. Before the campaign's online launch, the HR team identified 'champions' within the business and meetings were held with key stakeholders from each region across the country. These gauged the hurdles the organisation would need to overcome internally and worked to develop pre-emptive strategies to handle them. Some of these were purely logistical, such as ensuring depots not originally designed for a large female workforce had sufficient toilet and shower facilities for women. Others were more cultural, such as equipping the campaign champions with data to head off any claims that women were more prone to vehicle accidents or that they took more sick leave than men, so they could prove that these objections were baseless.

A lot of attention was given to how these new female employees were to be inducted into the business. A 'buddy system' was carefully developed and implemented to ensure the women had a pleasant, stress-free induction period with an appropriate employee they could turn to for assistance.

As the campaign played out over the months following its launch in April, various stakeholders were engaged and brought up to speed on its objectives and how they could support it. In July 2012, the Senior Talent Group and Operational Talent Group from across the country were given a detailed briefing on the project's background and the results of the campaign so far, followed by a discussion of how they could support it in their operations around the country. The project also featured prominently in a presentation by TNT Australia's HR Director, Sue Davies, at the 2012 Management Conference, as part of a broader picture about how TNT Australia's employee demographics needed to change. The level of support and enthusiasm across the business was remarkable and was key to the success of the project.

Results

1. Advertising campaign results

The online ad campaign ran from 1 April to 31 April 2012. In all, the campaign received 802 individual responses from 9198 click-throughs from its ads. This was an 8.7 per cent response rate, which was much higher than this kind of campaign tends to receive. After calling back and phone screening all 802 respondents, the TNT Australia Recruitment Team converted 21.95 per cent of respondents into potential candidates for frontline operational roles and either moved them into the organisation's standard recruitment process for open driver or dockhand vacancies in their region, or held them in a candidate pool for any future roles that became available.

2. PR campaign results

The online campaign was accompanied by a number of PR initiatives aimed at gaining media attention and recognition for TNT Australia's initiative. This was to both support the campaign and to differentiate TNT's employer brand in the Australian market, establishing the company as an innovative, female-friendly player in the transport sector.

From April to June the campaign received extensive and overwhelmingly positive national media coverage across all media. The initiative was covered in:

- Twenty-two newspaper stories in national, regional and local newspapers;
- Twenty-eight online news items on transport and logistics sites, employment news sites, job boards and recruitment industry sites;
- Three live radio interviews with HR Director Sue Davies and Recruitment Manager Tim O'Neill; and
- Six national TV reports and interviews, featuring HR Director Sue Davies.

3. Business results

The objective set for the project at the beginning of 2012 was to double the number of female drivers and dockhands in the TNT Australia business by the end of week 52. This translated into a target of 40 women to be recruited as frontline operations staff by the end of the year. The HR Team achieved this target in week 47, recruiting a total of 41 women by the end of that week. This included a total of 23 new female dockhands and 18 new female drivers.

The qualitative feedback from the business has been extremely positive, with managers and other stakeholders reporting that the new female employees have fitted into their teams extremely well, that they have "changed the tone and atmosphere of the place", that they have been recognised as valued and hard-working by their colleagues and that the customers "love them".

This campaign also required TNT Australia to look carefully at its onboarding and induction processes, which enabled it to make some changes to its buddy system for new employees and sped up the roll out of its induction reporting and feedback process. This benefited not only the new female employees but all inductees, and proved a benefit to the business overall.

Benefits to the company

For years, HR professionals have been talking about the global 'war for talent' and the increasing need for companies to be more innovative, more proactive and more strategic about how they find the key element that will give them the edge in the 21st century: good people. This has often been framed as a competition to find the best possible senior executives, leaders, key managerial professionals and technical specialists. But in recent years the vigorous Australian economy

has meant that TNT Australia has also had to apply the war for talent philosophy to recruitment for frontline roles to stay competitive in a tight labour market where a highly attractive resources sector has drained away potential employees from the transport industry.

The Women in Transport project is a highly successful example of the kind of initiative TNT Australia will continue to implement to meet the needs of an evolving business environment. TNT Australia and TNT generally cannot maintain the kind of reactive, male-focused, old-fashioned recruitment and talent management strategies that characterise the transport industry worldwide. The recruitment strategies of the future will be focused on passive potential employees, not on active candidates. They will focus on educating and informing people about the benefits of the company, not simply noting a vacancy. They will focus on multiple new media channels, including social media, not just traditional print advertising and job boards. And they will involve the whole business working in coordination to achieve talent objectives aligned with broader business strategies, rather than simply getting HR to 'fill these jobs'.

The Women in Transport project did all these things and achieved its 2012 objectives as a result of this innovation, proactivity and forward-thinking. Its success has laid a foundation for 2013 and beyond and TNT Australia recognises that Women in Transport is not a one-off campaign, but is part of an ongoing strategic direction aimed at making TNT Australia more outward facing, forward thinking, consumer aware and customer focused. The demographic change that the Women in Transport project has begun will help the organisation achieve these aims.

Appendix I

In order to advance the debate on Women in Leadership issues and to help identify current barriers to equality of opportunity, CEDA surveyed the business community, primarily its members and past Women in Leadership attendees from 4 March 2013 to 6 May 2013. There were 619 respondents, 93.3 per cent of whom were female. More than half (51.1 per cent) of survey respondents said they have been discriminated against while 93.2 per cent believe in the existence of barriers to equality of opportunity in the workplace. The majority of respondents who reported having been discriminated against were female (98.1 per cent).

TABLE 1
AGE GROUP

Age group	Percentage of respondents
24 and under	0.5%
25–29	4.5%
30–34	12.9%
35–39	15.7%
40–44	19.9%
45–49	18.0%
50–54	13.6%
55–59	10.0%
60–64	3.6%
65 and over	1.3%

TABLE 2
LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

Level of experience	Percentage of respondents
Board director	7.0%
Executive management	21.8%
Senior manager	30.7%
Middle manager	22.5%
Experienced employee	17.5%
Recent graduate	0.5%

Barriers to equality of opportunity

Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance the following barriers to women's equality in the workplace. The results were:

1. Workplace culture
2. Lack of female leaders
3. Gender stereotypes
4. Lack of flexible work practices
5. Affordability and accessibility of childcare
6. Sexism
7. Lack of mentors
8. Societal expectations regarding gender roles (e.g. household work/childcare)

Respondents were also given the option of adding any other significant barriers and the following were recurring themes:

- Entrenched boys' club, the all-male work environment and macho behaviour;
- Workplace design including the one-income earner household model and logistics of school and work hours;
- The confusion between presenteeism and commitment, the association of flexible work with lack of commitment, and the lack of career advancement for part-time employees;
- The difficulty in juggling work and personal life, particularly caring responsibilities for children and aged parents;
- The lack of support among women, women's lack of self-confidence and lack of sponsorship for women in workplaces;
- Unconscious bias; and
- Lack of commitment from leaders and executive teams towards gender diversity.

Improving women's equality of opportunity

Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance what would contribute most to improving women's equality in the workforce. The results were:

1. Corporate culture change
2. Flexible work practices
3. Mentoring
4. Accessible and affordable childcare
5. Non-mandatory targets for women in leadership roles
6. More transparent hiring practices
7. Mandatory quotas for women in leadership roles
8. Return-to-work incentives after giving birth
9. Time (generational change)
10. More generous paid parental leave for dads and partners (currently two weeks)
11. Greater uptake of unpaid parental leave by men

The following recurring themes emerged when respondents were asked to provide other options that would contribute to improving equality:

- Greater provision of flexibility;
- Sponsorship for women and promoting applications for senior roles from women;
- Building confidence and recognising that applications should be put forward even if not all criteria are met;
- Pay equity between men and women in similar roles and with the same amount of experience and qualifications;
- Change in gender roles at work and at home; and
- Social change around school hours and holidays.

Personal experiences in the workplace

Participants were also asked to tell us about an experience that they've had, good or bad, with gender issues in the workplace. CEDA received almost 400 responses to this question, with the following recurring themes emerging.

Good experiences include:

- The enforcement of meritocracy and commitment to gender diversity in the office;
- Successful application of flexibility, including effective use of job sharing and flexibility enshrined across the organisation; and
- Mentoring and other support programs to promote women's (and men's) career progression.

Bad experiences include:

- 'The boys' club', which appeared 32 separate times, with variations on the theme (one of the boys, jobs for the boys, blokey behaviour, pack mentality) also featuring prominently in responses. The boys' club is seen as holding women back from networking opportunities, excluding them from promotions and contributing to inequality of opportunity;
- The challenges of balancing career and motherhood, in particular the conflicting demands of senior roles and caring responsibilities. Some respondents suggested that motherhood should come before career, while others discussed the benefits and drawbacks of flexible work practices. Many respondents reported that flexibility is detrimental to career prospects and does not work within the status quo expectations of long hours and travel for senior positions;
- Outright discrimination at interviews (for example, being asked if candidate intends to start a family) and change of behaviour when pregnancy is announced. Covert discrimination (unconscious bias) has also been experienced;
- Women experiencing workplace bullying, harassment and intimidation by men. Intimidation usually happens without men necessarily realising they are doing it. There were numerous mentions of sexual harassment;
- The belief that men are threatened by highly-qualified women changing the status quo, particularly in leadership positions, and as a result, are resisting change;
- Experience with male leaders (e.g. CEOs) who have stay-at-home wives or wives who work part-time. This leads to the association of women with caring work or the belief that motherhood comes before career and other assumptions about gender roles;
- Assumptions from managers regarding the career choices of women once they are married/pregnant/a parent; and
- Double standards in the workplace, for example, men taking time off to look after kids perceived as good while women doing the same seen as lacking commitment to the workplace.

Views from survey respondents

This section comprises a selection of individual responses to the three open-ended questions on the survey. All responses are available on the CEDA website at www.ceda.com.au.

Responses to: What are the other most significant barriers to women's equality in the workplace?

"In most cases, even with two full-time working professionals, the expectation of the logistics of the household, including children, falls to the female. Men support with performing allocated tasks, whilst the female plans and organises the logistics (also likely allocating some specific tasks out). On a separate note, in my view, it is not the childcare accessibility and affordability that is the issue, it is the flexibility around the logistics of childcare and school etc – pick-ups/drops offs/activities/training/playdates etc. Childcare is for a max of five years, whereas school is for the next 13 years."

"Expectation that senior management/executive level roles must be full-time onsite. Require flexible work practices to become a viable option for males and females in senior positions. These positions also need to be redesigned to share senior responsibilities between multiple positions, rather than assuming a single full-time role is required. "

"A form of self-censorship – women not stepping forward to take on additional leadership or higher roles because of household duties and wanting to have time to spend with children. Culture change would help to overcome this – if men were willing to spend more time caring/cooking/cleaning women would be freed up from their self-imposed obligations to do these things at the sacrifice of their careers. I would have placed access to childcare higher when my children were younger – this is very important for younger women, and can be the start of a setback in career. It is societal expectations that mean that it is women who stay back to do the caring if they can't get childcare, however. "

"Many women lack confidence to put self forward unless they are almost certain of the prize (they won't come forward unless they meet all the criteria to a very high degree and are harsh self-critics), whereas their less talented male colleagues often won't think twice."

"It has been easy for years to employ or appoint and work with those you know within your circle. Recruitment and executive growth needs to be focussed on far more to ensure the assessment and recruitment process is far reaching. No more just 'being in the club'. Recognition of the investment made in bringing up middle to senior executives and not throw that investment away because of a short period of time when 'children' hit the personal agenda."

Responses to: What are the other actions that contribute most to improving women's equality in the workforce?

"Equal earning opportunities for women would make it easier for men to take unpaid parental leave while the family maintained a decent income."

"Specific organisational targets which are tied to individual performance management and remuneration models. Also more than mentoring – but specific sponsorship and programs for harnessing talent."

"Women should also want to take more senior roles. This means they need to become more mobile for international assignments. They need to make more time for working longer hours (I believe that any senior executive works more hours than middle managers; it does not really matter if it is a man or woman)."

"I have been a successful executive leader for several years and I have never experienced sexism until recently. The problem is that senior men (largely CEOs) don't even know that they are being sexist – it is subconscious. For example I was recently told by my CEO that I was 'lucky' to have a husband who collected my children. I replied that I thought my husband was 'lucky' to have a wife who collected his children."

"Women will be advantaged when men share childcare equally and prioritise it as highly as women and shape their working hours and their expectations of their staff accordingly."

"Processes designed to protect against bias (i.e. in hiring, performance reviews, promotion and pay reviews etc.)"

Reponses to: Tell us about an experience that you've had, good or bad, with gender issues in the workplace?

Good experiences

"The Managing Director enabled me to go back to work (as General Counsel) when my youngest child was five months old by providing flexible work practices: no management meetings before 8.30am and any to finish by 6.00pm; two days/ week I could work from home."

"I have been afforded a lot of opportunities in my career and on the whole my experiences have been positive. My best mentors have been males in their late 50s and 60s who have been great champions of me and challenged and mentored me to achieve great things."

"Mentor was the initiator of job-share with person I do not know well: it has been extremely successful."

Bad experiences

"I can't count the number of times that I have walked into a meeting with new people, and the rest of the room has looked behind me for my boss, or have assumed that the male that I'm with is my manager."

"It is just hard wanting it all – having three children and a career is extremely rewarding but we have to remain realistic about what we can achieve in the workplace and be fair to our families – If you choose to have children then I think we have a responsibility to give them our best – first and then the career comes second. (Not a poor second but it is certainly not as important as giving kids a solid, secure growing environment.)"

"Our Australian Board is also full of men with wives who are at home caring for their children. This causes subconscious bias in our work place."

"I worked in three different countries and unfortunately, I feel that Australia is way behind other Western World countries on support to women when they have children and want to have a career. There is a clear lack of support for affordable childcare and also transport for kids to go to school. One parent has to do it and unfortunately, there is a tendency for men to ask women to do so. This is a major constraint in the society here. I am Canadian and we are much more advanced on these dimensions which allowed me to have a wonderful executive career."

"Whilst in a job interview I was asked if my husband and I had plans to start a family."

"Men feeling threatened by intelligent and well-educated women, therefore keeping them from being promoted."

"If a woman has to drop off/leave to pick-up children from school (after school care generally closes at 6pm) – not seen as good whereas a man – he tends to be a caring parent. If a woman vents, she is emotional if a man vents he is assertive as required."

"My own reticence – following a merger between the company I worked for and another, I applied only for the position I was in at the time (a minor supervisory role). When I was awarded that job, I was told that if I had applied for the higher role I would have been awarded that too – but I automatically discounted myself from having a chance because I thought I didn't meet the full criteria. My own enemy!"

"Many senior men don't take women seriously, and still form 'boys' clubs' sharing jokes with other men. Many male staff don't like having a female boss and don't respect female bosses. Intimidation of males over females happens regularly, and I doubt some men even know they do it – the towering over females, the raising of their voices, the not developing relationships with females, the making of lewd comments about good looking females. It can be difficult to get a word in at meetings as the men just speak louder and deeper."

"I have had a manager suggest that I was not ready to return to work after having a baby and also use my personal childrearing responsibilities as an excuse for not providing me with an opportunity to be involved in work which would involve travel (as opposed to giving me an option)."

"Being told I did not meet an essential selection criteria for a senior position – playing golf at a particular club on a Friday afternoon, and when checked up with the club Fridays were a men's only day."

"Being asked in an interview how I would manage my children as the male interviewer felt the need to explain his wife would not leave their children to work."

"I also have an issue with traditional gender roles that are peddled incessantly in the media as being the 'ideal'. There is no such thing as an ideal – everyone is different and this difference will drive better outcomes for organisations as well as the country."

"Twenty years experienced direct discrimination with a male manager stating that pregnant women lost 80 per cent of their intelligence and working mothers were the most unreliable employees – a complaint to the HR manager resulted in me receiving counselling to accept the nature of the manager's cultural upbringing (he was Argentinian but living and working in Australia for 20 years)."

"I see one of the major issues in my workplace as a lack of female leadership. This tends to mean interviewing panels for leadership roles are always male, and male leadership styles are seen as the 'right' style for senior leadership."

"Almost all of the senior management of my workplace is male, while the vast majority of the rest of the workforce is female. I once had a manager tell me that it is a 'struggle to control a bunch of hormonal women'."

"Perception that when a female is not in the office, that she must be dealing with child-related issues; whereas when male is not in the office, he must be out at clients."

"Sat at a table of senior credit managers and their male people leader: seven men and one woman. The woman made a suggestion which was ignored by her peers and her people leader (a general manager). One of her male peers made exactly the same suggestion less than 15 minutes later in the meeting. She was then publically instructed by her GM to adopt THIS MAN's idea. It was a clear case of unconscious gender bias."

"I have the same job title and more experience than two other employees in my team. The other two employees are men and are paid $20,000 more than me."

"I also worked for one of the largest chartered firms, and was very, very concerned, when for international women's day, the firm celebrated a female director who continued to work while labouring in hospital to have her fourth child, then returned to work at 8am the next day."

"The concept of chivalry remains strong in Australian culture, which changes expectations about the gender roles. More significantly we work with a lot of other cultures that are not as progressive on women in leadership, so this can create barriers or pockets of male dominated leadership teams."

"Sexual harassment by way of 'ogling' and commenting on young women's appearance; making advances towards the opposite sex, asking about private circumstances, e.g. 'are you married?'; emailing sexist and pictures and jokes."

"On advising my employer that I was pregnant with my third child, I was told that 'I may as well resign'."

"Subtle undermining of women in senior roles, propagation of gossip about women in senior roles, sponsorship of male employees through higher education (e.g. MBA) but not for females; disrespect for family obligations, refusal of promotion unless established flexible work practices are given up."

"Part of the problem is around 'expectations'. If our MBAs and other 'leadership' training programs start from the assumption that a CEO must work 24/7, you have just eliminated a huge proportion of some of the most talented 'people managing', lateral thinking and frankly, great 'leadership material' people because, shock horror, they also want a full life outside of work as well. It is a generalisation but, it seems that more very talented females fall into that category than males (who are often more willing to 'sacrifice' life outside of work or don't even see it as a sacrifice). It is the same for partnership where there is an automatic connection between high billing, 70 hour week commitment and being 'partner material'. Is there really any correlation between high billing and a leader with strategic insight and vision or great people development skills? If anything, the correlation could be inversed."

"Women in leadership roles are gossiped about and called 'aggressive' where a male in the same situation and behaviour is admired and considered 'ambitious'."

"Under qualified men are always promoted and offered job opportunities over more qualified women. Although performance rated higher than my male counterparts, I have until only recently been consistently significantly under paid against them on the premise that 'my husband earns enough and I don't need it'."

"Working in a firm that has a bias to promoting young white males I think that gender issues are largely a corporate cultural problem. Another problem is that men promote other men so we need more female leaders who are good role models."

"For women in engineering (or the STEM fields), the reach needs to begin in junior school and it needs to be fun and interesting to the girls. Once they are further along in their education or in the workforce, it's nearly too late to impact the gender balance in the workforce."

"If there are four men and one woman in a meeting, the woman would be expected to take notes."

"Competent women often end up being the woman behind the senior man contributing to making the man look even better than he is already perceived to be."

"Throughout my professional career I have been employed on a lesser wage than males in my position and level of experience. One former employer mentioned that over the years I may 'reach an annual salary of 75,000 pa which would be a decent wage for a female'."

"I was the only female manager within a leadership group of eight at a company with predominately male employees. At the boardroom table other managers would swear and then apologise to me specifically. While some might consider that sweet, I felt it only highlighted my gender in a negative way."

"Was in a project meeting that was getting nowhere, I had a project manager (PM) say to me 'the boys are talking now'. I replied 'call me back into the meeting when you want a solution'. Walked out of the meeting with a big smile on my face."

Acknowledgements

CEDA would like to acknowledge the following CEDA Women in Leadership series sponsors. The following members have supported Women in Leadership event series during the last three years. The discussions from these events have helped shape and inform this research publication.

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CEDA would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following CEDA members and individuals who have contributed to CEDA's general research fund between 1 May 2012 and 1 May 2013.

CEDA undertakes research with the objective of delivering independent, evidence-based policy to address critical economic issues and drive public debate and discussion. It could not complete its research agenda without the support of these contributors.

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