

Print ISSN: 2233-4165 / Online ISSN: 2233-5382
doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.13106/ijidb.2017.vol8.no6.17

[Review]

Women in Management: An Australian Perspective

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Received: October 16, 2017. Revised: October 26, 2017. Accepted: November 15, 2017.

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to examine the current trends of women in management fields from an Australian perspective. With the increase of women in the workforce, this will prove to be a valuable study.

Research design, data, and methodology - This paper observed past research on women in management in Australia and defined some factors on their characteristics. Comparisons between the unique characteristics of women in management in Australia compared to those in Asia or other Western countries were evaluated.

Results - Our results have showed that there are an increasing number of women in the workforce in management areas in Australia, and they are steadily rising. The gradual shift of perception in society on women entering the workplace and working will continue to have a lasting effect on the number of women in careers of management.

Conclusions - The perception of women being at-home moms and men working has begun to shift in the current era. With this change evident in many countries around the world, other countries will also be able to include more women into the workplace. Raising awareness of the issues women face in the management world will be beneficial for aiding future women leaders.

Keywords: Women, Management, Australia.

JEL Classifications: M10, M16.

1. Introduction

With the current shift of world views in line with the rapid ascension of globalization, the dynamics of organizations around the world has evolved as well. Businesses consist of a more diverse body of employees in terms of ethnicity, age and gender (Jackson & Alvarez, 1992). Specifically, the increase in the number of women in the workplace for managerial careers as prominently increased (Omar & Davidson, 2001).

However, the literature and research on the reasons for the low proportion of women in senior management concludes that advancement rests not on individual merit or competence but on institutionalized discrimination against

women (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1991; Connell, 1987; Cockburn, 1991; Waters, 1990). Literature and research that focuses on the perceived differences between men and women as managers is contentious and divided between those who highlight the difference between men's and women's management styles (Lauterbach & Weiner, 1996), and those who highlight the similarities between their styles (Morrison et al., 1987; Sinclair, 1998; Schein, 1976; Wajcman, 1996, 1999). Few studies concentrate on the differences between women managers, or the propensity for women managers to assist other women in their aspirations to senior management (Abramson, 1975; Burke, 1994; Mattis, 1993; Staines et al., 1973).

Thus, this current study will aim to elucidate the trend of women rising that are working in management areas. It will be able to shed light on the current perspective of the disparities between women and men in the workplace, especially in Australia. The paper will discuss past research on the topic of women in the workplace, and how it has changed over the years. It will also illuminate the situation of women in the workplace in different countries, with a

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focus on Australia. The research will conclude with a deeper analysis of the women in Australia in the workplace and conclude with limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Review of Literature

Most literature and research on women in management concentrates on two major areas which include the reason for the low proportion of women in senior management; and/or the perceived differences between male and female managers.

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The early study of Staines et al. (1973) analysed two large surveys about women's attitudes towards women's liberation and became interested in the women in the surveys who were actively opposed to any changes in traditional sex roles. Staines et al. concluded that there is a group of anti-feminist women who exemplify what they labelled the "queen bee" syndrome. The "queen bee" displayed an attitude of counter-militancy which was based on their personal success within the system: both professional success (a high status job with good pay) and social success (popularity with men, attractiveness, and a good marriage). The true "queen bee" feels she has been successful in a male dominated workplace, while simultaneously managing a house and family with ease.

Staines et al.'s (1973) study also drew parallels between people, both male and female, with anti-feminist attitudes and attitudes such as an opposition to social change and political conservatism, who were religious, less educated and older. Age, according to Staines et al. (1973), brings resistance to change because the individual has a longer investment in the traditional ways, and because of the personal difficulty in changing deeply ingrained habits and beliefs (Staines et al., 1973).

Abramson's (1975) study, conducted in the USA, concurred with the study by Staines et al. when it revealed the extent of deference to the dominant system and values

displayed by the "token" number of women in management at that time. The study found that women who had already gained prominence in management ranks tended to deny that there was systemic discrimination against women. Abramson (1975) also used the term "the queen bee syndrome" to label this attitude, and concluded that successful women held these values because if they admitted there was systemic discrimination against other women in society it would undermine their own level of achievement (Abramson, 1975).

A more recent study by Mattis (1993) partly supports Abramson's claims and shows that women directors wanted to be recognized for their talents, abilities and knowledge, not as representatives of the interests of women. However, Burke (1994) contradicts these findings and shows that the majority of women on corporate boards in Canada were "functioning as champions for change on women's issues" (Burke, 1994).

The women interviewed were asked questions about the legislative initiatives of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity as well as the possibility of quota systems to increase the proportion of women in senior management. Such legislative initiatives are still contentious, which is why support or non-support for them can indicate the willingness of individuals to support structural change mechanisms implemented to increase the proportion of women in management.

Because senior managers, either male or female, hold positions of power in their workplaces, they are in a position to enact strategies that could challenge or remove structural barriers for women aspiring to senior management. This study explores the views of women in senior management in Australia towards existing programs designed to challenge gender inequity in management, and their willingness to assist other women who aspire to senior management. The results of the study will show that senior management women are divided in their support of legislative initiatives such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action and also in their propensity to assist the advancement of other women in their workplaces.

3. Results

3.1. The Australian legislative context

Barriers to women's advancement into managerial positions in Australian organizations have been formally recognized by government policies since the early 1970s. In 1974 anti-discrimination legislation was enacted at the federal and state levels of parliament in order to address issues of sexual harassment and inequality for women in the Australian workforce. Subsequent reviews of these policies showed that they were reactive rather than pro-active in bringing about changes required to assist women gain equal

standing with men in the Australian workplace (Burton, 1991; Poiner & Wills, 1991).

Consequently, Equal Employment Opportunity legislation was enacted into public sector Australian workplaces in 1984, and Affirmative Action legislation was enacted into private sector organizations of more than 100 employees in 1986. The broad purpose of these legislative initiatives was to counter stereotypical attitudes embedded in organizations that prevented women from gaining promotions - stereotypical attitudes, such as the belief that the practices relating to managerial responsibilities were masculine in character, and that many employees were reluctant to have a woman as their superior.

There were two ways in which the legislative initiatives attempted to address these stereotypical attitudes: first, implementing strategies that would ensure the practices for hiring and promotion of staff was purely on the basis of merit; and second, suggesting ways in which organizations might encourage and target more women for senior positions in their organizations.

3.2. Women-owned businesses

It is widely recognized that home-based businesses (HBB) are numerically a significant proportion of total businesses and are a critical part of the economic structure in most countries (Walker, 2003; Walker & Webster, 2004). In Australia, HBBs make up more than two-thirds of the small business population and while this makes the HBBs the largest business cohort in the economy, they are also the fastest growing. In light of this, within a small demographic scale, such as women-owned HBBs, there has been barriers to the path and stunted growth aspirations between male and female owned HBBs (Brush, 1992; Hughes, 2003; Still & Walker, 2006).

A study conducted by Cliff (1998) has shed light on the topic that although male and female entrepreneurs seem equally likely to desire business growth, there appears to be an important difference with respect to how they wish to expand. The findings suggested that female entrepreneurs were more likely to establish maximum business size thresholds, beyond which they would prefer not to expand, which are lower than those set by their male counterparts. The thresholds represent the size that the entrepreneur is comfortable managing, the size that enables the control of the organization, and allows the owner to devote a reasonable amount of time and energy to the firm, as well as the ability to balance personal life and family work with work in general.

Therefore, for female counterparts, the personal considerations appear to override the economic considerations in the business expansion decision. This has many important implications on concerning the government programs that are designed to increase the size and the growth rate of the female-owned business as they may not

relevant and suggest the banks that they might view women as better loan risks, given their more cautious attitudes toward growth.

3.3. Gender pay gap

Although there is considerable common ground on the meaning and goals of gender pay equity, there is no standard international measure to assess its achievement. Despite extensive research and policy attention over 30 years, the gender pay ratio remains remarkably resilient in Australia and internationally. This indicates the complexity of assessing and achieving gender pay equity and the associated challenges for those framing relevant policies.

Despite the complexity of defining and measuring pay equity, however, the Australian Commonwealth Government's Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA, renamed, from November 2012, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) or 'the Agency') deploys several programmes to encourage organizations to enhance gender equity and promote pay equity.

The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value poses practical difficulties for both research purposes and policy implementation. This arises because men and women often undertake different roles within the workforce, making it difficult to directly compare their work and its value. One framework commonly used to guide economic and policy analyses of gendered patterns of pay in occupations and industries is based on a 'human capital' approach to explaining wage rates. Using this approach, different levels of average wages between different groups of employees, such as men and women, are investigated on the basis of the different characteristics of the employees and the roles they take at work.

Typically, different characteristics between men and women, such as years of work experience, education levels, working hours, industry and occupation of employment and trade union membership, account for some portion of the observed gender wage gap. The rest of the gender wage gap remains 'unexplained' and can be attributed to unobserved variables and/or discrimination in the labor market. This approach, usually based on Oaxaca's (1973) and Blinder's (1973) decomposition analyses, underlies a diverse range of economic analyses of national gendered patterns of pay in Australia (e.g., Cobb-Clark & Barón, 2010; Cobb-Clark & Tan, 2011; Eastough & Miller, 2004).

3.3.1. Gender segregation

Gender segregation, commonly understood as occupational and industry segregation, has been identified as a contributor to pay inequity. As a factor in the undervaluation of women's work, Grimshaw and Rubery (2007) discern multiple dimensions of segregation: sectoral, occupational, workplace and work group. Undervaluation,

they explain, may be related to segregation at each, or combinations, of these different levels. They report that 'job level studies of gender composition have more power in explaining gender pay differences than studies that only focus on the occupation' (Grimshaw & Rubery, 2007: 58) and that work group gender segregation is important because separate pay hierarchies tend to be used for different workforce groups. Undervaluation arising from work being part-time has been documented by Grimshaw and Rubery (2007) and quantified (for the United Kingdom) by Olsen and Walby (2004).

The challenges associated with applying the equal remuneration provision under the Fair Work Act 2009 were apparent in the 2010–2011 case initiated on behalf of Social and Community Service workers (Fair Work Australia (FWA), 2012). The FWA hearings and the limitations documented above highlight the significance of other approaches to pay equity, such as the case analysis deployed in this article.

Policy discussions on gender equity were also provoked when, in 2010, a review proposed significant changes to EOWA, one of the main gender/pay equality 'watchdogs', and its underlying legislation (The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999; hereafter called the EOWW Act). A new Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (hereafter, 'WGEA Act') has been implemented in response to the review with reforms intended to strengthen the focus of the Agency. The recast Act includes acknowledgement of 'pay equity and the caring responsibilities of both women and men as central to gender equality' (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA), 2011). Along with augmented capacity to assist industry, and more streamlined reporting, compliance mechanisms are now strengthened to ensure that organizational reviews are accurate and industry benchmarks are deployed.

The new WGEA Act retains measures for ensuring that the government deals only with compliant organizations (WGEA, 2012a). This directly affects the reporting by, and potentially the performance of, organizations regarding gender pay equity. Significantly, the changes have potential to allow the Agency more responsiveness to changing employment circumstances, and greater use of quantitative measures, in pursuing the goal of gender equality and in including gender pay equity as part of this pursuit. As Piterman (2008) notes, diversity strategies lack resilience. Vulnerable to shifts in the organizational landscape, they can be easily undermined or wound back. It also highlights the positioning of equity as a personal value, where as one of Blackmore and Sachs (2007) respondents noted "people can go with it [equity] or not as a personal preference".

Unlike other organizational imperatives, gender equity is still seen as an added optional extra, "not part of the managerial self" (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). Bagilhole's (2002) study in a UK university found the "power and personal autonomy of some senior academics" allowed them

to respond to EO "in the way they see fit". This choice for men, to opt in or out, is also demonstrated here. The champion building process proceeds on the basis of, and is to a degree captive to, this assumption of male choice. This research supports the need for and capacity of male leaders to support and champion gender equity. However, passive enactment is not sufficient.

Gender change needs to be less reliant on individual leaders and at the same time it is reliant on individuals. We do need to find a way to shift from the individualistic concept and practice of championing gender equity as a choice, to gender equity being part and parcel of an organization's mandate. However, this requires (transformative) organizational change, which will not occur without a mandate from the top. Championing this change is a demanding role requiring genuine commitment and enactment, and the capacity to do so effectively is intimately intertwined with sex (bodies), gender and power. This is not the case with championing other business imperatives.

3.4. Gender equality

As the business case for gender equality continues to strengthen, so too does the expectation that building gender equitable organizations can be tackled in the same way as any other organizational change process. But can this logic be extended to our expectations of the role played by organizational leaders? While the critical role played by executive leaders as "champions" for organizational change agendas is well accepted (Kotter, 2007) and much explored, can this understanding simply be transferred to organizational gender change interventions? Given the increasing popularity of the business case approach, a focus on executive leaders' capacity and willingness to drive gender change is warranted. Gender change, which is understood to be both radical and transformative, requires "fundamentally altering power relations in organizations" (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000).

Difficulties in gender change interventions can therefore be seen as inevitable, because they redistribute power and rewards, undermining the privilege and advantage (Eveline, 1994) of those who, in turn, have the power to undermine change (Acker, 2000, 2006). Careful studies of gender change interventions, often reporting limited success (e.g., Benschop & Verloo, 2006; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Charlesworth & Baird, 2007; Cockburn, 1991; de Vries, 2010; Eveline & Bacchi, 2009; Pincus, 2009; van den Brink et al., 2010), have explored the influence of powerful men in resisting and undermining interventions and limiting change. Clearly it cannot be assumed that men can and will drive the radical gender change required.

What about women? Women's engagement with and contribution to creating change has been extensively explored, often with a focus on the development of a feminist consciousness (e.g., Colgan & Ledwith, 1996;

Marshall, 1984; Morley & Walsh, 1995; Pringle, 2004). This focus on women has been criticized as burdening women with the responsibility for change (Mavin, 2008) and has lacked a focus on those with the formal power as leaders to create change. Yet positional power continues to be identified as a critical variable in gender change initiatives (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Charlesworth et al., 2005; Mattis, 2001; Olgiati & Shapiro, 2002)

3.5. Leadership and women

Gender and organizational change efforts draws attention to the absence of an analysis of gendered power and agency in the current call for CEOs to include gender equity as part and parcel of their executive leadership role. Disappearing the gender of the leader as being of no consequence in this role, in effect adopting a gender blind approach, is unrealistic and potentially harmful. The assumption that a compelling business case will overcome the complexities of gendered leadership is naïve. So too is the assumption that a gender targeted approach where we turn our gaze to the male CEO, is the cure-all for the current slow progress. This research raises fundamental questions regarding the gendered power to effect change, signaling some caution and recommending further research.

Men undoubtedly appear well positioned to bring about change because of their positional power and the advantages conferred by their gender. The interviewees overwhelmingly subscribe to this position, that men make the best gender champions, and the accounts of their championing support this. But does this focus on men ultimately strengthen rather than dismantle the gendered status quo? Are we looking to men to be gender change heroes, thus inadvertently reinforcing the heroic masculine? Which men and under what circumstances will work for radical gender change? If their male belonging is their platform for change, can this ultimately be preserved, or must it be abandoned for the sake of gender change? The inherent contradiction of increasingly seeking out privileged men to champion gendered change, when they have been beneficiaries of the status quo cannot be swept under the carpet. Much more investigation is required to explore the limits of men's capacity and willingness to engage in dismantling male privilege.

Women have up until recently shouldered much of the burden of working for gender change in organizations. Expecting more from our male leaders and less from our female leaders might well be welcomed by women like Cecilia. It is critical that gender scholars participate in the debate surrounding this mainstreaming of gender change into the role of CEOs, and the increasing focus on male CEOs. This examination of the many factors at play begins this process by offering a more nuanced account of the engendering of the role. The question of working within or outside current gendered power structures to effect gender

change remains unresolved. While Lorde (1981), sounds the note of caution, that the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" it must be acknowledged that current practice is indeed trying to recruit those with access to the master's tools. Perhaps men like Geoff and Andrew have so far only been tinkering with, rather than dismantling the master's house. Nonetheless current practice provides ample opportunity to investigate the truth or otherwise of this feminist manifesto.

3.5.1. Women doing the work

Despite both men and women believing that men made better leaders of gender change, and that the male CEO was the most powerfully placed to drive change, women in both organizations were expected to champion gender change. Andrew divested some of his duties onto the most senior woman on becoming VC, although he maintained a visible and active championing role. However Mark while noting the difficulties for women in championing gender equity and also noting the risks of any one person on his Executive team taking on the mantle of equity, nevertheless removed himself and Geoff from various formal roles, placing the newly arrived Cecilia at the forefront of controversial gender change initiatives.

The commonly observed inclination for organizations to expect senior women to champion gender equity, could be partly seen as a natural response to the importance of senior women as role models. However, the expectation that senior women will undertake championing duties regardless of their portfolio, inclination or personal commitment can serve to undermine gender equity initiatives. This effectively absolves men of any responsibility, making gender equity women's work and women's problem. And, at least in the hyper masculine environment of policing, this opting out by men effectively undermined any chances of success, ensuring maintenance of the gendered status quo. Gender work remained gender marked, expected of senior women but not men.

However, women were implicated as somehow "self-serving" because of their sex group membership, and them this added to her visibility and vulnerability. This is not to suggest gender championing was easy for any leader. All nine leaders interviewed in the broader study acknowledged the difficulty of championing gender causes.

3.6. Women and Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in contributing to the growth of the global and local economy. Many of the contributions come from a strong emerging trend of so called "Mumpreneurs", which describes mothers involved in entrepreneurial activities. In this chapter, the authors study the new phenomenon of integrating motherhood and entrepreneurship; about their underlying

desire to create a better environment for their family and overall community. The uniqueness of being a Mumpreneur is about balancing work and life, sense of achievement and satisfaction with oneself, increasing income, gaining respect to equalize gender imbalance, and becoming independent. There are however challenges facing Mumpreneurs. These include starting ventures with lack of appropriate knowledge, resource constraints, stereotypes, balancing work and life, and limited networking opportunities.

Entrepreneurship occupies a significant role in reshaping economies and societies. It entails the new production process and the introduction of new products or services to new market segments that shapes new organizational structures (Craig & Lindsay, 2002). Generally, entrepreneurship can be defined as a practice by which an individual habitually creates and develops new innovative ventures of value in response to perceived business opportunities (Maritz, 2004). This practice creates employment opportunities, more income and family welfare. Women have the skills, knowledge and capabilities to be as entrepreneurial as men. According to GEM 2007, there have been an increasing number of women entrepreneurs throughout the world, who participate in early stage entrepreneurial activity and establish themselves as business owners (Allen, Elam, Langowitz, & Dean, 2007). The rate significantly and quietly increased from 5 percent to 38 percent in 30 years (Nelton, 1998).

An early stage of entrepreneurial activity determines business that has not been operated more than 3.5 years. On the other hand, established entrepreneurs who have been operational more than 3.5 years, in which time they have a higher chance of failure (Allen et al., 2007). Further evidence is supported by Non-profit Women's Business Research that the rate of women who start their new venture is double the rate as of men in America. Besides, there are 10.6million women owned businesses which create \$2 trillion of income yearly. An online website for US Women's networking group such as Ladies Who Launch also provides workshop for the members. It is found that almost 50 percent are mothers out of 25,000 members (Bower, 2005).

In Australia, the total percentage of female business owners is surprisingly very close to men (18.43 to 23.69 respectively). Furthermore, the prevalence rates of entrepreneurial activity is equivalent to 9.87 percent as of female and 14.02 percent as of male at the early stage of entrepreneurial activity. The percentage of established female business owners is at 8.56 whereas men at only 9.67 (Allen, Langowitz, & Minniti, 2006). Even though the female contribution to economic growth is increasingly important and is a key factor that should not be overlooked, little attention and support has been paid to women entrepreneurs. A study by GEM 2007 reports those women involved in entrepreneurial activity gain higher profits than men. This result suggests that women have a greater sense of

leadership that connects to better corporate governance and management practices, which impacts firm profitability (Allen et al., 2007).

4. Discussion

Current analysis appears to assume a close nexus between workplace experience and productivity and performance but warrants further investigation. For example, knowledge of changing policy or regulatory requirements is not proportional to the number of hours spent 'on the job' each week. A critical approach to examining links between part-time work and performance may seek to uncover possible assumptions in this area. A relatively uncritical influence of 'billable hours' and client facing time might underpin policy in this area (Ladva, 2010).

Gender pay equity within a large professional services firm via an external appraisal of the organization's own gender equity and pay analysis was reviewed. This provided a springboard for considering the firm's performance in this area, the underlying criteria of the government agency (EOWA) that have been used by organizations to shape their analysis of organizational gender equity and the influence of perceptions and assumptions of a 'gender neutral' labour market. The areas identified as contributing to the organization's ongoing pay gap within a context of continued monitoring and evaluation have wider resonance for organizations within and beyond professional business services.

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Gender work remained gender marked, expected of senior women but not men. Women like Cecilia effectively become conscripts, while men were seen as volunteers. Men, such as Andrew and Geoff, were shown enormous gratitude from women for their engagement and there was less reputational risk attached to their attention to gender issues. However, women were implicated as somehow “self-serving” because of their sex group membership, and for Cecilia this added to her visibility and vulnerability. This is not to suggest gender championing was easy for any leader. All nine leaders interviewed in the broader study acknowledged the difficulty of championing gender causes.

5. Conclusions

This research has practical implications. It confirms the critical role of executive champions and adds to our understanding of effective champion behaviors. It cautions champions of gender equality organizations to carefully consider the gender of champions and questions the effectiveness of allocating gender champion duties solely to senior women. It demonstrates possibilities for building executive support through two-way processes of engagement between men, gender interventions and their organizations, thus working for transformational change. However this strategy can also backfire. Men exercise choice in their engagement with this role. Finally it proposes a model of partnership, where senior men and women can play complementary roles leading gender change, and ensuring that gender change is men’s and women’s business.

The limitations of this study is that it focused on a narrow topic of women management in Australia. In the future, suggestions for research could be on a elaboration of the research span to include more diverse countries and comparative.

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