

MELODY GRATIC **WHITE PAPER**

REDUCING VISIBLE & INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES REQUIRES RADICAL SOLUTIONS

In the workplace, women experience both visible and invisible boundaries. The visible boundaries are things like the "glass ceiling" or the lack of women in leadership positions. The invisible boundaries are the everyday experiences that women have at work that can be harder to see or quantify, like microaggressions or the pay gap.



Executive Summary

In recent years, the number of women in the workforce has increased significantly. However, despite these gains, women still face many obstacles in the workplace. Some of these obstacles are visible, such as the gender pay gap and the lack of women in leadership positions. Other obstacles are less visible, but no less real, such as unconscious biases, harassment, microaggressions, and discrimination.

Statistics

- 57% of women say they plan to leave their current job within two years, and 21% of these women expect to be gone in less than a year. (Deloitte, 2021)
- 52% of women have experienced some form of harassment or microaggression in the past year. (Deloitte, 2021)
- Even though 50% of the population is female, women generate just 37% of global GDP. (McKinsey & Company, 2017)
- For every 100 men promoted to managers, only 86 women were promoted. This gap is greater for black women (58) and Latinas (71). Thus, at the beginning of 2020, women held just 38% of manager-level positions versus 62% of men.



Background

The question of gender equality has been at the forefront for the past couple of decades; nevertheless, women in the workplace still face a unique set of challenges and difficulties in the office. A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 43% of working women have experienced some form of gender discrimination at work, be it in the form of being treated less favorably than their male counterparts, being passed over for promotions or being paid less for doing the same job. Furthermore, women are often underestimated and undervalued in the workplace. They may be told that they are not as capable as men or that they need to prove themselves more. This can lead to women feeling like they have to work twice as hard as men to be seen as equally competent.

The Visible and Invisible Boundaries

The 2021 McKinsey Women in the Workplace report uncovered that for every 100 men promoted to managerial level, only 86 women are promoted. When it comes to promotions, men are often promoted based on their potential, while women are promoted based on their performance. This disparity is one of the many ways that the playing field is not level for women in the workplace. When men are promoted based on potential, it means that



they are given opportunities to grow into leadership roles. They are given the chance to learn and develop their skills. This is not the case for women, who are often promoted based on their performance. This means that they are expected to already have the skills and experience required for the role.

This disparity has a number of implications for women in the workplace. First, it means that women have to work harder to prove themselves. They have to outperform their male counterparts in order to be considered for promotions. Second, it means that women are less likely to be given the opportunity to develop their skills and grow into leadership roles.

Another major problem which still plagues women is: When they are clearly competent, they are also often judged to be unlikable – by both men and women. This is a problem that has been well-documented, and it's one that has serious consequences for women in the workplace. When women are seen as competent but unlikable, they are less likely to be promoted and more likely to be passed over for leadership roles. There are a number of reasons why women are seen as unlikable when they are competent. One reason is that women are often judged more harshly than men. This is especially true when it comes to their appearance. Women are judged on their looks far more than men, and they are often expected to conform to unrealistic standards of beauty.

Another reason is that women are often seen as threatening to men. When a woman is successful, it can make some men feel insecure. This is one of the reasons why there is such a strong pushback against successful women in many workplaces.

Finally, it's important to understand that this problem is perpetuated by women themselves. Women internalize the message that they need to be liked in order to be successful. As a result, they often downplay their own competence in order to make themselves more likable. This only serves to reinforce the idea that women need to be likable to be successful.

➤ It's no secret that women have to work harder than men to achieve the same results. Whether it's in the workplace or in other areas of life, women are constantly having to prove themselves and their worth. And yet, despite all of their hard work, they are often not given the credit they deserve.

This is especially true when it comes to leadership positions. While women have been shown to be just as capable as men when it comes to leading organizations, they are still vastly underrepresented in leadership roles. In fact, according to a recent study, women make up only 4.8 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.

There are many reasons why women are not given the credit they deserve, but one of the most frustrating is that their achievements are often attributed to men. This is known as the "glass cliff" phenomenon, whereby women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions during times of crisis, when the risks are high and the odds of success are low.

While the glass cliff may seem like an opportunity for women to prove their worth, it's actually a trap. Because they are more likely to be appointed during times of crisis, women leaders are also more likely to be blamed when things go wrong. And when things do go wrong, it's often because the challenges they faced were insurmountable from the start.

➤ When it comes to success in the workplace, it seems that women have to outperform and be smarter than their male counterparts. This was the findings of a 2008 report called "The Athena Factor", which found that women in high positions in male-dominated fields, such as tech, suffer harsher penalties than men when they slip up. The study found that when men and women make mistakes, people are more likely to attribute the error to the woman's lack of ability, while they are more likely to attribute the same mistake to a man's lack of effort. In other words, when a man makes a mistake, people are more likely to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he simply didn't try hard enough. On the



other hand, when a woman makes a mistake, people are more likely to write her off as being incompetent.

This double standard is unfair and can have a negative impact on a woman's career. When people are quick to judge and dismiss a woman's mistakes, it can make her feel like she is



not good enough and that she doesn't belong in her field. This can lead to her doubting her own abilities and feeling like she is an impostor.

Another boundary is women end up shouldering the lion's share of caregiving responsibilities in the household. This disadvantages them in the workplace.

Women have always been the primary caregivers in the household. They are the ones who take care of the children and the elderly. They are also the ones who are usually the primary homemakers. This places a lot of responsibility on their shoulders and often leaves them with little time for themselves.

"From February 2020 to January 2022, male workers regained all jobs they had lost due to the public health crisis, according to an analysis by the National Women's Law Center of the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report. However, 1.1 million women left the labor force during that span, accounting for 63 percent of all jobs lost" (SHRM, 2022).

Millions of women left the job market to care for their children during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools and day cares closed to prevent the spread of disease. But this trend isn't new. Women left the workforce at higher rates than men did even before the pandemic, according to research by the management consulting firm McKinsey and Company.

This heavy burden of responsibility can have a negative impact on women's careers. It can make it difficult for them to advance in their jobs or to even keep their jobs. Employers often view women with children as less committed to their work and more likely to need time off. This can make it harder for women to get promotions or even to keep their jobs.

Women face constant discrimination in the workplace and one of those types is pregnancy discrimination. Despite laws intended to end workplace pregnancy discrimination,

thousands of women face employer discrimination related to their pregnancies every year. This is true for women in low wage physically demanding occupations, high wage occupations, and even workplaces dedicated to supporting women.

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed in 1978 and made it illegal for employers to discriminate against women because they are pregnant. Despite this law, pregnancy discrimination is still rampant in workplaces across the country.

A recent study by the National Women's Law Center found that one in four pregnant women report experiencing discrimination at work. This discrimination can take many different forms, from being denied a promotion or pay raise to being forced to take leave without pay.

In some cases, women are even fired from their jobs simply because they are pregnant. This is especially true for women who work in low-wage occupations or who are physically demanding jobs.

Unfortunately, pregnancy discrimination is not only still happening, but it is also on the rise. A study by the Center for WorkLife Law found that pregnancy discrimination claims have increased by 41% over the past ten years. There are many possible explanations for this increase, but one likely reason is that more women are working while pregnant. As more women enter the workforce, they are more likely to experience pregnancy discrimination. Another reason for the increase in pregnancy discrimination claims could be that more women are aware of their rights and are more likely to speak up when they experience discrimination.

It is clear that pregnancy discrimination is still a major problem in the workplace. And it's not just a problem for low-wage workers or physically demanding jobs. Pregnancy discrimination can happen in any workplace, even ones that are supposed to be supportive of women. For example, a recent study by the Harvard Business Review found that nearly half of women who work in the tech industry have experienced some form of pregnancy discrimination. This is an alarming stat because the tech industry is supposed to be a leader in supporting women in the workplace. If pregnancy discrimination is happening in this industry, it is likely happening in other industries as well.



Additionally, women have another detriment against them in the workplace...work history gaps. This is particularly concerning for women who've stepped away from the workforce, whether to care for children or aging parents, to pursue a degree, or for any other reason. When women return to the workforce after a period of time away, they often find themselves at a disadvantage. They're paid less, they're less likely to be promoted, and



they're more likely to be passed over for high-level positions. The reason for this is simple: Work history gaps are viewed negatively by employers. In a recent study, researchers found that when employers were given two identical resumes, one with a work history gap and one without, they were significantly more likely to choose the resume without the gap.

The study authors concluded that "employers appear to penalize applicants with employment gaps, even when the content of their resumes is otherwise identical."

This is a major problem for women, who are more likely than men to take time off from work to care for family members. In fact, a recent study found that 41% of working mothers have taken a significant amount of

time off from work to care for a child or other family member. These work history gaps can have a major impact on a woman's career. One study found that for every year a woman is out of the workforce, she loses 4% of her earnings potential. That means that a woman who takes five years off to raise her children will earn 20% less over the course of her career than a woman who doesn't take any time off.



The experiences of minority women in the workplace are shaped by a range of factors, including their race, ethnicity, and national origin. While minority women have made significant strides in educational attainment and labor force participation in recent decades, they continue to face significant disparities in employment and earnings. The 2017 National Survey of College Graduates found that, compared to their white counterparts, black and Hispanic women were less likely to be employed full time and more likely to be unemployed. And, when employed, black and Hispanic women were more likely to work in lower-paying occupations and to earn less than white women with comparable levels of education. In addition to these economic disparities, minority women also experience a higher incidence of workplace discrimination. A 2021 study by the Pew

Research Center found that more than half of black women (76%) and nearly four-in-ten Hispanic women (39%) said they had experienced discrimination on the job because of their race or ethnicity. The effects of workplace discrimination can be far-reaching and have a negative impact on both the individual and the economy. Studies have shown that



discrimination can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety, which can in turn lead to physical health problems. Discrimination can also lead to reduced productivity and lower job satisfaction, affecting an individual's ability to advance in their career.

Discrimination has a distinct impact on businesses and the economy more broadly. When workers are not able to reach their full potential, businesses miss out on the benefits of their skills and talents. This can lead to lower productivity and innovation, and ultimately, lower economic growth.

The term sexual harassment spread through academic circles in the 1970s and began to gain traction as a legal concept in 1977. That

year the feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon put forward the argument that workplace harassment constitutes sex discrimination, which is illegal under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Federal judges had previously rebuffed this idea, but by 1978 three courts had agreed with MacKinnon, and in 1986 the Supreme Court concurred" (Harvard Business Review, 2020). The legal recognition of sexual harassment as a form of discrimination was a watershed moment for women in the workplace. It gave them a new tool to combat a problem that had long been tacitly accepted as a part of doing business. And it helped change the culture of workplaces, making it clear that sexual harassment would not be tolerated.

But the progress that has been made in the fight against sexual harassment is far from complete. In many ways, the #MeToo movement has exposed just how pervasive the problem still is. And while the law now recognizes sexual harassment as a form of discrimination, there are still gaping holes in its protections.

For one thing, the law only applies to workplaces. That means that sexual harassment in other settings, like schools or in social interactions, is not covered. And even in the workplace, the law only applies to employers with 15 or more employees. That leaves out a



huge number of workers, including many who are most vulnerable to harassment, like domestic workers and farmworkers. What's more, the law only applies to harassment that is based on sex. That means that other forms of harassment, like racial harassment, are not covered. And even when it comes to sexual harassment, the law only protects against

"severe or pervasive" harassment. That leaves a lot of room for interpretation, and it means that many instances of harassment are not covered. Finally, the law only applies to harassment that takes place in the workplace. That means that harassment that happens online or through social media is not covered.

Despite all of these limitations, the law is still an important tool in the fight against sexual harassment. It has helped change the culture of workplaces and made it clear that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. But there is still a long way to go before the problem is truly eradicated.

Radical Solutions

The gender pay gap, gender inequality, and gender discrimination are big problems in the workplace. But what can be done to solve them? Here are some radical solutions that could help close the gender pay gap and eliminate gender discrimination in the workplace.

1. Get rid of salary secrecy.

One of the main reasons the gender pay gap exists is because women are often paid less than men for doing the same job. But if salaries were made public, it would be much harder for employers to get away with paying women less than men.

2. Make it illegal to ask about salary history.

Another reason the gender pay gap exists is because women are often lowballed when it comes to salaries, since their previous salaries are used as a starting point for negotiation. If employers were not allowed to ask about salary history, it would be much harder for them to offer lower amounts to women.



3. Require equal pay for equal work.

This one is pretty self-explanatory. If men and women are doing the same job, they should be paid the same amount of money.

4. Encourage flexible work arrangements.

Flexible work arrangements would benefit both men and women, but they would especially benefit women who often have to choose between work and family.

5. Provide paid parental leave.

Parental leave is another way to help close the gender pay gap. Currently, the United States is one of the only developed countries that doesn't offer paid parental leave, which puts us at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent.

6. Promote women to leadership positions.

Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions. By promoting more women to leadership positions, we can help close the gender pay gap and eliminate discrimination in the workplace.

7. Make it easier to report gender discrimination.

Currently, it can be very difficult for women to report gender discrimination in the workplace. But if we make it easier for women to report discrimination, we can help put an end to it.

8. Educate employees and employers about gender discrimination.

Many times, gender discrimination happens because people simply don't know any better. By educating employees and employers about gender discrimination, we can help create a more equitable workplace.

9. Advocate for change at the policy level.

Ultimately, change needs to happen at the policy level in order to close the gender pay gap and eliminate discrimination in the workplace. We need to advocate for policies that support gender equality in the workplace.

When it comes to gender equality in the workplace, we still have a long way to go. Despite progress in recent years, the gender pay gap and gender discrimination are still big problems. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women earn about 82% of what men earn. That means for every dollar a man earns, a woman earns just 82 cents. The pay gap is even wider for women of color. For example, black women earn about 61% of what white men earn, and Hispanic women earn about 53% of what white men earn.

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