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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigating the Detectives: The Study of Human Nature Presented by</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Genders in Agatha Christie’s Novels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half the Sky: Indian Women Struggling to Break the Glass Ceiling</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance and career success – How will I know as a female executive</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I am accepted?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake news? Sexual harassment and attacks as causes of failure in midwi</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention in rural Cambodia*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Rights</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning the Lens Around — A Study of The Cardcaptor’s Best Friend:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomoyo Daidouj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to promote and maintain the separation from an abusive partner:</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dual perspective to inform future practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Development of Women Professional Farmers in Shaanxi, China.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence from Shaanxi, China.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering Women through Creative Writing</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Pay Gap – Seeking Dialogue</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does The Sheen of Motherhood Leave behind Every Other Success in a</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman’s Life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Lebanese Women into History: Masculinity, Femininity and the</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I improve my practice? A journey into my personal and</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional growth as a development worker engaged with gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inequalities in Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision of Diversity and Finance in Business</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Patterns of Female and Male Executives</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenge of integrating gender analysis in gender non-related</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research: The experience of an interdisciplinary project on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multimedia cultural heritage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of the role of the sexes in Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Woolf?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The very vilest cinema things”: gender, vulnerability,</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representation and feminism enigma”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curse of migration, the left wives of Bihari migrants</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigating the Detectives: 
The Study of Human Nature Presented by Different Genders in Agatha Christie’s Novels

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ABSTRACT

This study will discuss the figure of the detectives in Agatha Christie’s novels, how they view psychological aspect within the society and its relation to crime. The term ‘human nature’ here refers to people’s tendency to commit a crime as a result of unsatisfactory human interactions. The discussion mainly focuses on character’s development in male and female detective, and how they usually look at some possible attitudes or conditions that cause someone to deviate from the rules, stated in the novels as crime motives.

Travis Hirschi in Crime and Human Nature (1985) developed three theories based on sociological perspectives on the causes of crime: strain or motivational theories, control or bond theories, and cultural deviance that will be reflected throughout the major issues in the fiction. The discussion will also revolve around the stereotypes of gender and characterization in a war period when the grief is a commonplace. People read detective fiction because it challenges the brain and creates tension. Nevertheless, Christie as one of the female writers in the Golden Age of crime fiction (1920s – 1940s) discloses that human nature is universal, and this generalisation has led to an on-going discussion about how the world works.

Key words : crime, fiction, detectives, gender, human nature.

Introduction

Agatha Christie, the Queen of Crime, is one of the most prolific mystery authors, having written an estimated 90 novels, 15 short story collections, and several plays with most of novels translated into foreign languages. Not only her ingenious plots and riddles but also her personality and private life are intriguing aspects treasured by her mystery and fiction readers. In popular fiction, crime has been regarded the foundation of an entire genre for over 150 years and is favoured by people of all ages.\(^1\) Crime fiction fills the thirst for knowledge of curious adults, presents a form of pleasurable entertainment to older people with more or less bitter experiences in life, and in some cases – just like the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood – shows children the dark side of the world.

Since the beginning of the 1920s, Agatha Christie started her fascinating career as a mystery and detective fiction author with her first novel The Mysterious Affair at Styles, which featured a Belgian detective famously known for his ‘little grey cells’, Hercule Poirot. In inventing the detective, Christie was inspired by an unknown Belgian refugee whom she met when she was working at a local dispensary. She created Poirot as a retired Belgian officer with intelligence above those of people around him. About the detective, Brown (2014) suggested:

Detective is the embodiment of rationality. He is labelled as a spokesman for the power of thought and intelligibility of the universe. The detective’s place as a defender of rationality positions him in the larger conflict between rationality and intuition (the life of emotions).²

In 1930, The Murder at the Vicarage introduced its spinster detective from St. Mary Mead, Jane Marple, a pleasant woman with an excellent memory and pleasant attitude. Predominantly in pre-classical detective novels (the era before First World War), while male detectives were found in books, women were considered ‘incapable of the detective work’.³ This was due to the stereotype of women being more vulnerable than men and their lack of interest in scientific knowledge – these ideas were proven wrong after the 1920s. ‘The First World War was the major factor in accelerating the actual growth in the employment and the participation of women in the public world’.⁴ At this time, women came forward to show their capability in society. When previously marriage was considered the end of a woman’s career (since she had to only take care of the household), after the so-called modern era, women had much more freedom to learn valuable skills for their living like teaching, designing, and writing.

Women writers often looked at the details of everyday life and human interaction within familial society. Meanwhile, men writers tended to create the ‘knight-errant’ detective in their hard-boiled novels like Raymond Chandler and Hammett, who were reputed crime writers in US at that time. According to David Glover, ‘crime fiction presents an effective facade of gender conformity where women writers dominated the culturally “feminised” classical tradition with its elision of masculine modes of heroism and its emphasis on domesticity and detail’.⁵ When creating the detectives, Christie was concerned with the impact of her characters on the readers by making them universal and easy to recognise.⁶ It is as if the readers can, to some extent, expect to see Miss Marple in their neighbourhood or someone like Poirot in a fancy restaurant. Both detectives depend intensely upon the psychology of motives. As a result, their interests to human attitude and behaviour become a crucial aspect in the investigation.

**Man of Instinct vs Woman of Intuition**

In Mysterious Affair at Styles, Poirot first appears as an old friend of Hastings whom he met at the post office. The phrase mon ami, which means ‘my dear friend’ was his typical greeting only to Hastings as his reliable and dearest companion. To be a male detective, he is not reluctant to show his affection. The figures of Poirot and Marple establish rich understanding of human affairs; however, they are not attached to any love relationship. Poirot has the skills to accurately detect women’s attitudes. This understanding somehow protects him from being the victim of tricky circumstances, unlike his sidekick Captain Hastings who is easily distracted by women. Regarding relationships, he has placed himself as an acknowledged father figure. He advises Hastings to avoid easily falling for a woman that has captured his attention. According to Plain, ‘Poirot’s skill as a detective is revealed by his ability to accurately decode the female’.⁷ Here, Plain argues that Poirot figures ‘as a place of rescue and rationality’.⁸ Marple also justifies the complication of love in an eloquent manner, leaving her as the wisest spinster in St. Mary Mead. She is as resourceful as the woman with experiences, proving that women without company do have a good understanding of the way feelings work.

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⁵ Bruce F. Murphy, The Encyclopedia of Murder and Mystery (New York: St Martin’s Minotaur, 1999), p. 232.
Marple and Poirot have the similar tendency to be discreet and maintain secrecy, so most of the time, they exclude their thoughts from their sidekicks or narrator. They believe that humans find it naturally difficult to keep a secret, even if they have promised to do so. Both their sidekicks are always left wondering what is happening inside the detectives’ mind as they always appear to be prudent about the case. Brownson points out to this trait of Poirot of being wooden – just like other classic detectives – because he never lays out a hypothesis for anyone when he is in doubt. Limited access to the detective’s mind is somehow what intensifies the suspense.

It is made clear that Poirot can rely on his instincts while Marple trusts her intuition. What is the difference between both elements? We know that they are used interchangeably. As a male detective, Poirot is inclined to a tidy arrangement. Poirot believes in his instinct the same way as he believes in the neatness of handwork. His habit to carefully pay attention to the arrangement of objects in some ways helps him think of wider possibilities. It causes him great pain if something is not well arranged. He argues that ‘with the precision of the fingers goes precision of the brain’. When he was stuck with the missing link in Mrs Inglethorp’s case, he built up a house of cards to calm his anxiety. It appears that examining of the coffee cups to check for contamination with strychnine was something he did instinctively. Poirot encouraged Hastings to pay attention to instincts because it ‘can neither be explained nor ignored’. To Miss Marple, intuition is affected and shaped by experience. It is possible to be learned by connecting to people and looking at their facial expressions, body language, and physical appearance to further interpret fully informed actions. Otherwise, it is not purely ‘female intuition’ and Christie wants to emphasise that the accuracy of the specialised knowledge indeed complements the brain work.

Likewise, Light (1991) asserts that Poirot’s role as a foreigner is ‘forgiveably cissy, too old and too unfit to be heroic (his tight patent shoes prevent him from walking too far, let alone taking a lunge at an assailant)’. Light further explains Poirot’s distinction from Doyle’s Holmes or Sayers’ Whimsey with their ignorance and aristocracy. Unlike those two detective figures, Poirot feels at home wherever he is. His friendly attitude and open-mindedness represent the traits of a happy traveller. Although he admitted experiencing air sickness on his flight in The Murder on the Cloud, he enjoyed travelling to new places, very much like Christie. Based on the biographical exploration, Christie was fond of travelling. She wrote a book titled Come, Tell Me How You Live, retelling her experience to Middle East with her second husband, Max Mallowan. Meanwhile, Marple preferred a sessile life – she enjoys to stay in only one place. Spending most of her time in St Mary Mead, she works together with the local constables in this fictional place where people still talk on their way home and remember each other’s names – a friendly neighbourhood representing 1920’s urban English society which not much less different with those in Victorian era.

Poirot’s cases are set among the circle of wealth and power. Many times, he was offered a large sum of money for his professional work. As a detective, Poirot does not let himself be driven by the power of money and irresponsible authority. In this case, the amateur detective is the symbol of independence, as he is not attached to any unit nor exclusively working for anyone. The detective is settled in himself, with no oppression from external parties. Besides urgency, the case should be puzzling enough to intrigue him before he decides to handle the case. Light argues that ‘Poirot embodied a compromise between the present and the past, one which offered readers some of the hopefulness of modernity without its anxieties’.

He is the embodiment of the hero after the period of war. Although he appears less heroic, he represents the humbleness and authenticity of a man figure living in the country as a foreigner and is

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12 Ibid., p. 118.
content with the life of retirement within suburban society. He grows vegetable marrow in the garden at King's Abbot and gets upset when the fruit grows smaller than he desires. His eyes turn green when he is excited, and his moustache is always stiff. Poirot maintains his perspective to be different from others as he usually leaves out the tangible evidence and focuses on small details instead. He is a man of dignity and a humble friend with passion.

In *Murder on the Links*, Poirot receives a letter from Mr Renauld asking for his detective services owing to an urgent matter related to his safety. Poirot comprehends that his client is truly facing harsh difficulties merely from the boldness of his handwriting. It is made apparent that Poirot is relatively skilled at observing handwriting and detecting forgery. His subconscious mind understood the role of the detective as a reliable problem-solver – he realised from the handwriting that his presence was urgently needed.

Somehow, the presence of the detective provides a soothing atmosphere to those looking for the truth and to those trying to assure every one of their lies – like what Mr Renauld was trying to do together with his wife. In fact, assistance from a detective was required merely to realise his plan. Mr Renauld had planned to fake his own death in order to avoid his neighbour, Mrs Daubreuil. His past mistake with Mrs Daubreuil – or Berauldy – was haunting him for a few years owing to the unfinished case from many years ago. Just like in *The Murder on the Orient Express* with the Cassetti case, *Murder on the Links* had ‘a case within the case’. Christie referred to the latter as the ‘Berauldy case’.

Poirot’s ability to detect the red-herrings – or false clues – can be attributed to his broad knowledge of criminal records. In the novel, the murder of Mr Renauld was someway similar to the Berauldy case that took place around 20 years earlier in Paris. Mr Berauldy was killed in his house with Mrs Berauldy gagged and bound by two suspicious Russian men, as reported by her. The investigation revealed that the break-in by the masked men was a fake story to conceal the fact that Mrs Berauldy was the one who had stabbed her husband to death.

*Murder on the Links* requires the reading of the body of either the dead or the living. The first dead body found on the links (who is Mr Renauld) was actually the latter one to be murdered. Previously, a tramp had died of an epileptic fit and was stabbed after his death with the same dagger used in the second mother to deceive the police, but not Poirot. This method is similar to the puzzle that Christie applied in *The Body in the Library* where Miss Marple used her sharp wit to analyse the blurry time of death. This was done by the murderer to get sufficient time to create alibis. By reading of the body, the detectives trace the actions to obtain the past narratives. However, there was a shift in the detective’s role from recalling the past events to deciding the future. Gill Plain states that ‘the detective evolves into a fortune-teller, no longer piecing together events that have already happened, but instead attempting to assert control over those that are yet to take place’. Based on its title, *The Body in the Library* begins when Mary, a house maid at Gossington Hall, finds the body of a blonde woman, Ruby Keene, on the rug in Colonel Bantry’s library. Surprisingly, the dead girl in the library was not Ruby Keene but Pamela Reeves, a poor scout girl who was dressed to look exactly like Ruby to fool the police. The real Ruby Keene was found lifeless in Bartlett’s car.

Next is to take a closer look at the figure of this spinster detective. Her first appearance was in *The Murder at the Vicarage*. It was inspired by a short story *The Love Detectives* published in 1926 where two adulterous lovers committed a murder and confessed separately, and Christie tried to adapt the motive. *The Murder at the Vicarage* is narrated by a vicar in St Mary Mead who surprisingly finds the body of Colonel Protheroe in his study room drenched in blood. Colonel Protheroe, who was married twice – with Anne Protheroe as his second wife – was considered irritating by people around him, even by his own daughter. Her daughter, Lettice, falls for Lawrence Redding, a painter who had an affair with her step mother. Everyone was suspected of having a possible motive for committing the crime and Miss Marple claimed to

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15 Plain (2001), p. 44.
use her intuition to analyse the people by exposing the background of each suspect. Here, the reader’s mind was challenged with Anne Protheroe and Lawrence Redding claiming to be the murderers. The psychological puzzle involved Miss Marple investigating the fact behind the confession because she found it rather suspicious. The vicar required assistance from Miss Marple as he believed that she could be trusted to handle this rather perplexing case.

The figure of Marple was inspired by Christie’s grandmother who had an endearing persona. Marple had been living in St Mary Mead for a very long time. As the setting of her murder mystery, Miss Marple knew every single bit of her little village and was fond of knitting, gardening, and chatting with her neighbours. As an old woman living in the village, she found gossip to be another method of investigating. She considered human character and personality as part of human nature that are more observable compared to the motives.

Another distinctive characteristic of Poirot and Marple is their old age. Both Christie’s detectives were rather old to secure them from the interest of the criminals. It was believed that the reasons why young women mostly became the victims of the crime because they were physically inviting and that this could cause disruption to the legacy and / or social norm. In other words, old age means a protection as well as a support to the immunity of the detective. ‘Elderly and middle aged women are much less vulnerable and then largely because they learn something which endangers others’. Also, if not by their sidekicks, the constables, or the nephew, there appears to be the undercover secret- agents that also contribute to look after the detectives in regard to their considerably higher status; to protect a brainy old man or a brilliant spinster will be worth the struggle. When it comes to protection, the old age is mostly helpful as a disguise to be inquisitive without being suspected as the investigator. To have elderly detectives, Christie is against the common prejudice that old age represents human frailty.

Many critics have discussed the implications of elderly single women as detectives; Marion Shaw and Sabine Vanacker point out that ‘The abilities old ladies possess [...] amount to the essential qualities of the detective, a strong moral sense, a knowledge of human nature, and a capacity for deduction based on carefully observed evidence’. The elderly spinster detective, with her affinity for gossip and sharp observational skills, as well as her unthreatening persona is perfectly suited to work ‘undercover’ in the enclosed, and often domestic, setting of golden age crime novels.

Spinsters like Miss Marple break the stereotype that women should be attached to a patriarchal structure. Hoffman includes the spinster detective among the nonconforming women because they function outside the accepted paradigm of marriage and present an alternative to the paradigm. At that time, under the influence of the Victorian era, unmarried women were perceived as knowing little about life. ‘I said mildly that though doubtless Miss Marple knew next to nothing of Life with a capital L, she knew practically everything that went on in St Mary Mead’. Craig and Cadogan argue that Christie tried to turn the deficiency of an old Victorian woman into a good account by giving her a specialty in human behaviour. Although Miss Marple has little experience in life, ‘she has a very productive familiarity with other people’s’.

Miss Marple builds up her theory of understanding people by identifying groups and making comparisons. From one viewpoint, she objectively contrasts housemaids with women of the estate or nursery workers and officers. “Her human nature is not class-structured, with social status shown as

17 Evans (2009), p. 73.  
irrelevant to crime, desire and moral value”. Her technique depends on a very basic level on characterisation of moderately established human characters. She frequently achieves the right solution to an issue by contrasting the people with similar situations or personalities in St Mary Mead. She classifies people into several groups and believes they always behave based on the category. Miss Marple’s method of detection is considered a representation of Christie’s Golden Age style: basically comic generalisations, with the social landscape re-framed when detecting the criminal.

Miss Marple can be considered a comical figure, the under-underestimated character who appears to be an unexpected hero for the younger generation. She undoubtedly has the capacity to find out things. In *Nemesis*, she is described as a chatty, fluffy old lady whom other people expect to talk, to ask questions, and perfect for gossiping. Miss Marple usually begins the conversation by telling people about her stories so the people she talks to eventually share theirs. She is particularly eloquent in any kind of conversation, from the nice talking to the tough ones: family, friends, travel, gardening, marriage, birth, and death.

As a keen observer, Miss Marple intelligently connects the dots between what she sees and listens to and then classifies her observations. One of the typical traits of Marple, when investigating a case, is that she attempts to expose the possible motives of the other characters. Indirectly, Marple pays more attention to causes. To put attention more on the question ‘why’ instead of ‘how’ will be discussed more on the next chapter.

Poirot’s neatness, unsnobbishness, and great attention to detail (even if toward something not related to the case) are typical traits of Christie’s femininity. She gave the amiable Miss Marple the courage to speak her voice and break the prejudice that says an old woman is incapable of detective work. This is the type of masculinity Christie cannot resist to expose.

**Human Nature and Crime**

Human beings are in charge of their emotions and capable of understanding and controlling the world they live in. Naturally, every human needs interaction with other people to share their feelings, passion, and views about the world. Some people choose to have their own companion while some others are quite satisfied with themselves. Either way, interactions create feelings in connection with the attitude: happiness, sadness, disappointment, frustration, madness, satisfaction, jealousy, excitement, and many others. Feelings are intangible while emotions are discernable. ‘Emotion is essential to human existence, a powerful engine to action and a necessary ingredient of the fullest cultivation of the intellect’.

Charles Brownson in his chapter ‘Psycho-Intuitive and Noir’ makes the distinction between cold knowledge and warm knowledge. Brownson asserts that cold knowledge emphasises rationality while warm knowledge refers to the exploration of analytical and emotional form of knowledge. His view is also rooted in the *Cultural History of Causality* by Stephen Kern who developed the historical and sociological understanding on the causality of crime and murder based on science and systems of thought. He made the following remark:

[…] murder superbly illustrates the various characteristics that action theorists offer to explain human behavior, because it is strongly intentional, highly motivated, full of meaning, the result of a desire or a ‘trying’ directed at a clear goal, and usually ‘done for a reason’.

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23 Ibid.
Answering the question of ‘why’ crime has consistently occurred in human history both in real life and literature instead of ‘how’ it occurs is a major topic that is widely discussed. The emergence and significance of the term ‘murder’ brings the readers from the Victorian era to the modern era and from the topic of ancestry to that of ideas and emotions.

Keating (1977), in Crispin’s chapter ‘The Mistress of Simplicity’ argues that ‘Christie thinks of humanity as much the same all over the world; that even the motives (to commit crime) are the same whether you are Swedish, Hottentot, or Chilean’. To some extent, Agatha Christie suggests or particularly states that any action will elicit a similar response regardless of race, faith, or citizenship. 

[...]

The nineteenth century (or earlier) took murder in the street and the cities. In the twentieth century, in detective fiction written by both women and men, the domestic space became the location of murder and evil intent. Christie’s puzzling mysteries are mostly set in country houses, where crime is caused by a troubled marriage in a family, resulting in either women killing their husbands or husbands killing their wives. Christie’s works have a steady radicalism that enables us to see beyond marriage secrecy, something that has, for quite some time, been considered the sacred part of a home. Companions can even work together to kill another person who prevents them from achieving their ultimate goal. Furthermore, the criminals in Christie’s novels are not professionals and are ‘ordinary people making extraordinary choices’. There appears to be three most common themes to be discussed in Christie’s fiction; justice, money and love. The victim is usually a figure that does not satisfy all the requirements to be such an interesting human being. The victim can be an irritating person everyone dislikes, a past murderer, or someone rich enough whose money and power are the objects of envy for many. More often than not, the latter seems to encounter larger portion of complication.

Money has been the primary reinforcer while love predominantly functions as the plot driver. Love is hardly straightforward and subversive. The pattern in Christie’s plots usually involves a vicious crime committed against someone wealthy enough to have enemies – usually, the spouse gets the benefit of the murder. The problem involves criminal activity that threatens the whole community although there is always an individual who is responsible in the first place. Miss Marple believes that love can be a stronger motive for murder than malice. Moreover, often, hatred is caused by either too much possession over love or unrequited love: ‘[...] hate would die out. You could try and keep it up artificially, but I think you would fail. It’s not as strong a force as love’. In Nemesis, the pure love between Michael Rafiel and Verity was ruined by the obsessive love of Verity’s guardian, Clotilde-Bradbury. Some individuals seem able to sustain the balance between logic and feeling, but others are not. Love is an irresistible force that leads to compulsive behaviour.

27 Keating (1977), p. 43.
30 Ibid., p. 67.
31 Ibid., p. 67.
33 Christie (1997), p. 162
In *Murder on the Links*, when Hastings tried to convince Poirot that Madam Daubreuil was the real murderer of Mr Renauld, Poirot disagreed. For Poirot, there were three motives behind murder: murder for money, *crime passionel* (sudden murder), and murder for an idea.

‘Money is not the only motive for murder’, I objected.

‘True’, agreed Poirot placidly, ‘there are two others, the *crime passionel* is one. And there is the third rare motive, murder for an idea, which implies some form of mental derangement of the part of the murderer. Homicidal mania and religious fanaticism belong to that class. We can rule it out here’.34

Two of the motives above seem to be correlated with the cause of crime, as proposed by Travis Hirschi who sees it from a sociological perspective. Murder for money as the strain theory while *crime passionel* is similar with the control theory. Travis Hirschi developed these theories further as: strain or motivational theories, control or bond theories, and cultural deviance.35

Strain theory assumes that people ordinarily obey society’s rules but violate them when following those rules does not enable them to satisfy their legitimate aspirations. Control theory suggests that it is first necessary to explain why anyone should want to do the right thing and directs attention to the importance of learned inhibitions against crime. Cultural deviance focuses on learning, but asserts that criminals have learned their values from deviant rather than law-abiding persons.36

Strain theory is in line with murder for money based on Poirot’s first theory. In strain theory, there is a battle between the society’s rules and the reality of an individual’s principle. Strain theory is the deviance that occurs when a person fails to fulfil his own conformity to pursuing his goals. They obey the laws in some aspects but are trapped in the internal uncontrollable desires, especially if people start comparing their lives with one another. The conflict between extravagant lifestyle and the actual financial situation is sometimes difficult to avoid and mainly becomes the reason behind someone committing the deviant acts. The strain theory applies to most of the classic whodunit works with the conventional murder motive being financial problems. As in *The Body in the Library*, Miss Marple states about her view towards this issue.

*The Body in the Library* presents the example of a victim that is attractive and talented. This young woman, Rubie Keene, with her admirable persona had invited a millionaire named Conway Jefferson to adopt Ruby and inherit the rest of his wealth. Josie Gaskell, Rubie’s cousin together with her companion plans a horrid murder of two people at once – Rubie and the young scout woman, Pamela. The motives of crime revolve around ‘either the fear of unflattering aspects of their lives being discovered or the desire for money and the escape from either likely or actual poverty’.37

Murder for money is also possible owing to growing greediness in an individual due to the insatiable human nature and never-ending need of human beings. Greed is uncontrollable. At such times, it becomes difficult to draw the line between good and bad. As the desire develops, the crime motive may also evolve from the need for fulfilling daily needs to living in luxury, from a small amount of money to large property, like inheritance. ‘Murder for inheritance is another common theme in Victorian murder stories from Dickens to Doyle’.38 Undoubtedly, it continues to the 1920s stories of Christie although one scholar admits the decline in the use of murder for money as motive as compared to the Victorian era.39

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35 Ibid., pp. 64-66.
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 208.
Control theory suggests that a man is allowed to do unkind acts if his conventional orders have been broken. Control theory assumes that crime can occur over reactions caused by violation of rules and disruption of harmony in life. These individuals have generally done what they should, but the effort they make seems futile owing to the behaviour of irresponsible people. It can eventually lead to crime in the community. Control hypothesis recommends that it is first important to clarify why anybody should need to make the best choice. The control theory has a similar understanding to murder for passion or ‘crime passionel’ mentioned by Poirot. Crime of passion can emerge from the failure of the will to control the emotions, leading to the legal/moral question of whether a person could be held responsible for such a crime. If a criminal endangers the life of an individual, it is considered necessary for an individual to protect himself/herself from such a threat. Crime committed by women for the purpose of protection falls under this category. The best example of this theory can be seen in The Murder on the Orient Express where all people work together to kill the murderer of a kidnapped and murdered baby of an aviator. Despite its unusualness and Christie’s dramatisation of how the murder was carried out, the crime allows the readers to understand the widespread impact of the child’s murder, which should be condemned by society.

The last theory, i.e. culture deviance, states that deviation occurs when the set of rules are not accepted by a more powerful society. In the case of cultural deviance, the individual deviates on the basis of adoption and reinforcement. It is influenced by a former perpetrator who presumably escapes the punishment of law. An individual might see the impact of a crime as an encouragement to contribute to the irregularities. Eventually, cultural deviance fails to regard deviations as wrongdoings because the perpetrators tend to justify what they have done. These crimes tend to reoccur under similar conditions. Cultural deviance focuses on adapting yet declares that lawbreakers have taken their qualities from corrupt instead of honest people. Hercule Poirot explains his view about the tendency of a person to commit similar crimes after succeeding in the previous attempt.

‘I am speaking to you now of the psychology of crime [...] If a man commits a crime, any other crime he commits will resemble it closely. The English murderer who disposed of his wives in succession by drowning them in their baths was a case in point. Had he varied his methods, he might have escaped detection to this day. But he obeyed the common dictates of human nature, arguing that what had once succeeded would succeed again, and he paid the penalty of his lack of originality.’

There is a consistency in behaviour. This repetition is suspected to occur greatly because of the offender’s character and personality. Besides, Mr Renauld’s experience several years earlier with the Berauldy Case seems to imply that similar methods were being used on this occasion. Mrs Berauldy, who had changed her identity to Mrs Daubreuil was responsible for the murder of her husband in the past together with her past lover: Mr Renauld. The present crime committed by her daughter is assumed by Poirot as being the heredity factor. In connection to families, some of the factors indeed affect children’s behaviour. ‘The degree of affection and disciplinary practices of the parents’ – family nurturance, for example, can be the contributing factors for delinquency. Murder on the Links is one of Christie’s novels featuring a complicated plot that involves of more than one family.

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In criminology, each theory discussed by Hirschi has its drawback, especially related to timing concerns and differences among individuals. However, the theories bring forward the common problems that arise in society which can stimulate crime, from the smallest union (marriage) to the larger community.

Homicidal mania, the third motive mentioned by Poirot which is usually correlated to mental derangement, is presented in Nemesis, when a possessive woman kills a young woman named Verity whom she treats as her own daughter. Admitting to having loved Verity too much and refusing to let her be owned by anyone else, Clotilde kills and buries her near the house and then kills another woman disguising her as Verity to make sure that Michael Rafiel is accused of the crime. The tragedy occurs because of Verity’s plan to marry Rafiel, a young man who is sincerely in love with her. This kind of murder is associated with mental illness. In any case, this is quite popular among crime novelists as the scientific knowledge provides a space for experts to develop their skills. Effectively, it makes murders explicit by including “the implication of a unified personality, the cohesiveness of a psychiatric case history, the appearance of a single explanation, and a simple sensational label”.45

The condition of a person with a mental disorder – the psychopath – is generally similar to that of a normal person until the point at which there is a significant difference in the levels of expectation and self-control. While people normally have expectations of others at a reasonable level, the psychopath expects too much of others and ends up disappointed. This disappointment then generates negative thoughts and emotions that cause them to commit reckless acts. Difficulties in self-control and expressing his/her feelings to others can eventually lead them to the most vicious crime. Psychopaths are assumed to have less developed self-directed dialogue in silence so their emotions cannot be channelled properly.46 Above all, it is ‘individual pathology rather than amoral reason, that create murderers’.47

Kern explains the causes of crime related to jealousy, revenge and greed under the broader aspects of emotions. He proposes that feelings incorporate an extensive variety of human experience, ‘from basic social emotions such as pleasure and pain to simple object-oriented emotions like fear and anger to more complex object-oriented emotions in form of jealousy, revenge and greed’.48 For Miss Marple, spite is another crime motive that should not be discarded. Spite is one of the psychologically negative traits a man possessed that can affect the emotions and enables a person to commit crime simply due to his desire of pursuing personal pleasure or achieving inner satisfaction by causing harm to others believing it is as what they deserve. ‘Spite, you know, sheer spite. It’s an astonishing motive – spite’.49

Greed and jealousy are basically derived from within the self whether or not the bad things have been committed beforehand. Compared to those two, revenge is a form of emotion that less emphasizes the inner influence but rather on the previous devilish deed that has been done by a perpetrator. In this case negative emotions arise due to extrinsic factors caused by situations that harm an individual either mentally or physically. Revenge is a negative emotion that is quite unfortunate to arise in an individual because this can change a virtuous character to a perpetrator. In other words, revenge is the result of the violation of an individual’s acceptance. In Christie’s novels and most of other crime fiction, revenge is also commonly used as the murder motive.

Based on the criminal gender, Christie employs a more negative sentiment when the culprit is female, whereas a male culprit has a higher level of neutral or positive sentiment.50 ‘Males are five to fifty times as likely to be arrested as are females’.51 However, throughout history, more women than men have

been victims of crime, especially if associated with sexual desire. ‘The gender distribution of the dead in
detective fiction has not yet been quantified but what is noticeable is that young and attractive women
(across cultures and throughout the twentieth century) are often the victims of the murderers’. 52

For some people, particularly men, desire and aggression can be affected by emotional corruption
or jealousy and ultimately lead to crimes against women like ‘rape, torture, mutilation, necrophilia and
cannibalism’. 53 Under certain circumstances, the human mind and emotions are difficult to follow whether
in men or women. Some elements like moral and religious views have rarely become the focus in detective
fiction although these two elements can be the factors that drive a character’s decision before committing
deviant acts. In brief, to look at motives and causal relations reflect the complications of human nature.

Conclusion

Detective fiction represents the rise of prejudice against women that arose during interwar years.
It challenges the critic to consider the enormous quantity of key issues during this period. Some people
consider detective fiction to be an ephemeral literature - short-lived with little connection to the present
moment. However, the public has been showing constant interest toward this genre for what appears to
be several decades. The act of murder committed in detective fiction represents the darkest side of a
human being. It is inevitable that puzzlement is more dominant than any psychological explanation given
by the characters. However, it is not to be ignored, as human nature basically has the same psychological
rules.

Therefore, infidelity is the main theme behind most of Christie’s motives for the characters. The
exploration of the detectives pertains to the figures who are practically above average but keep their feet
on the ground, upholding their realistic views and involving members of the community in which they live.
In the creation of the detectives, Christie attempts to trace masculinity and femininity, through two iconic
figures with different genders. It is well recognized that Christie’s presentation of the detectives is her
method of contrasting with the expected image among readers. Detectives are expected to be heroic,
gallant, and exceptionally kind who experience much of the adventure and legwork alone. These traits are
dissimilar to Christie which preferably gives the old age to her private investigator. Being a female writer
who stretched out in wartime, Christie’s view is very much influenced by the Victorian-era values she
experienced in her personal life: domesticity, patriarchal hegemony, culture, and social context. Yet, she
made the effort to modernize these ideas to showcase her understanding of the world, especially in the
moments after she lost her father and anticipated a local dispenser in a first World War. Alison Light
mentioned Christie’s view as “conservative modernity”.

One interesting theory that has not been explored is the theory of reward and punishment. This
pertains to the probability that an individual will refuse to commit deviant act, even if he has a strong
motive. This individual will not perpetrate the evil act because he realizes there will be no reward for him.
On the other hand, most people who have planned to commit crimes have been aware of the
consequences. Yet, they still choose an evil path because they have their own reward, providing mere
satisfaction. To examine these features will require a long list of individual samples and personal conditions.
The existence of a motive does not necessarily mean someone will commit a deviant act. Some people
possess the same motives and still reject the idea, even after considering its reward and punishment.

No human being wants to be treated badly, but everyone has a tendency to hurt others - no matter
how good the intention may seem. Emotion is the most influential and complicated element of human
nature because it is capable of driving both vicious and virtuous acts. Emotions empower individuals to lose
or build themselves with a clear mind that someone can prevent bad things from happening. The world is
changing, but the way we behave and expect others to behave remains the same. In summary, there is one

52 Evans (2009), p. 73.
statement from Kern that captures my attention. "Human existence is anything but gratuitous, especially not for a novelist who intentionally sought to change the course of fiction."\(^{54}\) Human nature and motives have never been easy topics for discussion. They require in-depth investigation that even detectives find difficult to explore.

Half the Sky: Indian Women Struggling to Break the Glass Ceiling

Rupa Korde, Ashini Patel

Introduction:
Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen makes a compelling case for the notion that societies need to see women less as passive recipients of help, and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation, a view strongly buttressed by a body of evidence suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development (Gore & Korde, 2009).¹

Today in the 21st century, where women work alongside men, the issue of fair and equal treatment at work is often raised and debated. Women constitute almost half the population of India (48%) (Census India, 2011)² and thus half of its potential labour force. But the LFPR of women in India stands merely at 28.6% for 2014 (The World Bank, 2016). The ILO’s Global Employment Trends (2003) reported that women continue to have lower labour market participation rates, higher unemployment rates and significant pay differences compared to men. Though the government of India introduced several laws to prohibit inequalities or discrimination practices against women at workplace, there still exists a wide gender gaps, in terms of pay, opportunities, etc. In majority of work places in India, the so-called “glass ceiling” is not completely broken yet. There are many facets of gender inequality, and in the current scenario, it is “professional inequality” that incessantly acts as a barrier for women's advancement at the workplace. Professional inequality, as explained by Amartya Sen in one of his lectures, refers to discrimination in terms of employment, remuneration, promotion at work and even occupation (Sen, 2001).³

This research paper attempts to find evidence of glass ceiling faced by Indian women in the organized labour market and enquire into the causes and consequences of the same. It aims to provide policy recommendations for employers and the government to break the glass ceiling.

³ http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1822/18220040.htm
and its associated forms. For balanced and sustainable development for any country or world as whole, “it is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half the human race” (Annan, 2006).

**Glass Ceiling**

The glass ceiling is one of the most emotional and controversial facets of employment in any organization today⁴. The phrase, ‘Glass Ceiling’, was coined by Marilyn Loden in 1979⁵ but became quite popular after journalists Hymowitz and Schellardt used in The Wall Street Journal in 1986. It is defined as the invisible barriers through which women can see elite positions but it is impossible for them to reach them⁷. It is a situation in which progress, especially promotion, appears to be possible but restrictions or discrimination create a barrier that prevents it.⁸ It is also the root cause why we see low percentage of women in the top management when compared to men⁹.

**Glass Ceiling in India**

A 2013 ruling made it mandatory for publicly listed firms to have a minimum of one women director on their boards to improve gender diversity. As a result of which, 11.2% of board members on Indian firms were women in 2015 compared to 5.5% in 2010, according to a report by Credit Suisse. But India still has a far way to go, where its performance is below average, when the world average stands at 14.7%, whereas countries like Norway (46.7%) and France (34%) top the list. In India, most of family controlled companies appointed female family members as directors on the board (Reliance Group), as a result of which female board members might not have any voice and may act as mere dummies. ¹⁰ Although, India is the first among developing countries to have made such a norm mandatory, it is the private sector that is being an abysmally poor implemener of a norm that should have been adhered to without being forced upon companies in the form of a law.¹¹

It should also be noted that the number of senior positions held by women has fallen, dropping from 7.8% in 2014 to 7.2% in 2016 and compared with a global average of 13.8%, according to the Credit Suisse study. Even though nearly 5 million women enter India’s job market every year,

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⁴ http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/eciuo/FilesForWeb/GC_submit.pdf
⁵ http://www.ecatalognow.com/article/Marilyn+Loden+On+Feminine+Leadership/766271/73810/article.html
⁶ http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4091&context=hbspapers
⁹ https://tejas.iimb.ac.in/interviews/35.php
between 2005 and 2014, the number of working-age Indian women with a job dropped by 10% according to ILO. This drop was the largest of any country in the world in that period.

**Barriers for Indian Women at the Work Place**

According to Becker’s model (1957), discrimination in the labour market can be explained as the result of employers’ tastes or preference\(^\text{12}\). Some employers have a ‘taste’ for discrimination against women workers and thus, hiring women imposes an additional psychic cost on them. Employers will then hire women only if they are willing to work at low wages and the difference between male and female wages is sufficient to compensate for the additional cost. Bergmann (1974) extended Becker’s model to highlight the relation between occupational segregation in terms of gender and wage gap. Bergmann proposed that if employers’ taste for discrimination against women becomes very large, it might lead to the complete exclusion of women from ‘male jobs’ and overcrowding in ‘female jobs’, thereby depressing the wages in the latter group\(^\text{13}\). Barriers for Indian women at work takes multiple forms as seen in Exhibit 1.\(^\text{14, 15}\)

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\(^{12}\) Becker (1957) had developed a model for race discrimination followed by employers, employees and customers. But the theory behind the model has been used by other economists and Becker himself to explain gender discrimination in employment.


### Exhibit 1. Barriers for Indian Women at Work Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Factors</th>
<th>Work Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-cultural, legal, personal and organizational forces</strong></td>
<td>Affect a woman’s rise to the upper echelons of an institution are for the most part, universal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women – Primary Caretakers</strong></td>
<td>Many women quit or drop out midway through their careers to take up responsibilities at home. In India, women are still considered to the primary caregivers, and socio-culturally it is expected that they will be the ones to sacrifice (their careers) if someone is needed to look after the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Birth</strong></td>
<td>The responsibility of child birth and child rearing are primarily a women’s job, which results in lower experience at the workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women - Emotional</strong></td>
<td>Women are perceived to be more emotional because their management and leadership styles are different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards for Women</strong></td>
<td>Women are not only held to higher standards than men but also because they are neither made aware of, nor given opportunities that would catapult them to the upper echelons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Pay Gap</strong></td>
<td>Presence of gender pay gap for the same job, and the pay gap widens with higher pay and responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Break</strong></td>
<td>It is very difficult for women to come to employment after a career break, because of marriage, pregnancy, child-birth, or change of job/location, which creates a loop in their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Time Jobs</strong></td>
<td>Women are required to compromise at the work place, where women comprise of majority of the part-time workforce, thereby gaining lower hourly rates and less accumulated superannuation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acceptance and career success – How will I know as a female executive that I am accepted?

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Abstract

It is said that women have improved remarkably in progressing within the organisational hierarchy during the last decades. However, they still lack access to power and decision-making positions, do not achieve appropriate proportions in several management levels as well as similar payment compared to men. In addition, it seems that current approaches of gender equality are not effective, both at policy and company level. Research already identified several barriers women face. Nevertheless, little is known about the influence of the supervisor’s acceptance towards female executives in German-speaking countries. The present study assumes that acceptance towards women in management positions as well as commitment to implement equality can positively influence the career success of women. Thus, the study investigated in visible indicators for acceptance as well as perceptions of equality within companies. Results indicate that perceptions between women and men as well as several managerial levels differ.

Theoretical background

A large number of empirical and theoretical research has been concerned with factors that influence career advancement of individuals for the last decades. In particular in gender research the question arises how career factors of women and men differ and which of them lead to success. This is still meaningful not at least because of the introduction of the women’s quota in Germany, as well as the growing lack of specialists and executives, global competition and the war for talents in whole Europe. However, even though current data show that women reflect a similar human capital than men, they do not reach equal management positions or earn a similar income. The glass ceiling is a often cited phenomenon describing that women do not achieve certain positions within the managerial hierarchy. Several causes of the glass ceiling are identified as visible and invisible barriers which inhibit the promotion of women. This include in particular processes which regulate recruitment, promotion and remuneration as well as behavioural and cultural barriers like stereotypes, prejudice, informal networks, and interpersonal relationships.

A possible theoretical explanation for less career success of women could be found within the social role theory. Thus, gender roles are strongly linked to the typical assumption of specific perceived gender stereotypes which are formed by observation of women and men. Moreover, the concept of social role theory explain beliefs about male and female traits and characteristics and how women and men should behave within our society to be accepted. For instance, Eagly and Karau explain unequal treatments women face in decision-making positions. Prejudice can arise due to the incorporation of characteristics women held in our society compared to attributes that are needed in management roles. Thus, incongruence of women and management positions can lead to a decrease in acceptance and as a result in promotion. However, a variety of explanations occur that try to analyse factors that help women to succeed. These factors relate primarily to behavioural, individual and organisational career approaches. Thus, the behavioural approach considers the proactive role of individuals who create their career by influencing career choice and advancement. The individual approach is closely linked to the human capital theory which emphasise the importance of education, traits and experiences of a person. The
organisational concept focuses on internal structures and considers promotion practices as well as organisational sponsorship as beneficial career factors.\cite{16,17}

The current study is located within the organisational frame and tries to elaborate the less explored topic of the influence of supervisors’ acceptance towards female executives in German-speaking countries. Studies suggest that a personal relationship with the supervisor is crucial, whether employees are promoted or not.\cite{18} Further studies show that professional support of women depends on the attitude of their superior.\cite{19} Moreover, research demonstrate that in particular during the intermediate stage of a female career, the recognition and support of the management is often lacking or less intensive.\cite{20} Also Autenrieth and colleagues\cite{21} claim that the direct supervisor is a “…source of special career-related support…” (p. 137). Moreover, Larwood & Blackmore\cite{22} indicate with their similarity-attraction-theory gender discrimination within promotion practices. Thus, individuals tend to promote persons that show a similar age, appearance, ethnic origin, career background as well as gender. Also Ohlendieck\cite{23} describes with the principle of self-similarity the same phenomenon. Therefore, supervisors tend to recruit persons with similar attributes, especially gender. Thus, the question arise how successful professional development of women could be, if the supervisor demonstrates (un)conscious prejudice and gender specific stereotypes towards women.

As already mentioned, the construct of acceptance towards female managers through their supervisors has rarely been subject of empirical studies. In contrary, studies about the pure attitude towards women in the working environment show high interest in research. The majority of the studies elaborate the relationship between gender perceptions and culture.\cite{24,25,26} For instance, Balgiu\cite{27} reports, that male participants show a less positive attitude towards women in management positions. Thus, the gender of the participants seems to have an influence on the attitude. In addition, a study of Mihail\cite{28} reports that male students show more often a negative attitude towards female managers. However, further studies in the area of the research subject indicate that female managers face more frequent resistance of their peers and subordinates.\cite{29,30} In addition, the study of Friedel-Howe\cite{31} shows that men tend to accept more often male supervisors. Moreover, a longitudinal study in the US demonstrates a similar result, even though a trend towards a better attitude towards female managers is recognisable.\cite{32} One of the few studies in German-speaking areas examines gender preference of female secretaries towards male supervisors.

The literature describe acceptance not only as an attitude towards a specific subject, it includes always an active component. Thus, acceptance is a subjective-evaluative attitude, which is associated with active participation. It can be described as “…the chance [of a female executive] to find explicit or implied consent for certain opinions, actions, proposals and decisions in an identified group of people [e.g. Employees, colleagues, supervisors] and to be able to count promisingly on their consent under reasonable conditions.”\cite{33} As a result, acceptance towards a person can take place on two parts, the individual and operational level. Therefore, the main research questions are:

RQ 1: What are the indicators that show acceptance?
RQ 2: What are the perceptions about career success and equal opportunities?

Methodology

Research Design

The focus of the present study is to explore potential factors of career success. In particular indicators for acceptance which could be seen as visible behavioural patterns. Additionally, the study tries to discover possible different perceptions between gender as well as managerial levels. To elaborate signs of
acceptance and perceived assumptions an online-survey among managers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland was conducted. Advantages for the application of a survey lie on high flexibility, handling, and less expenses. The questionnaire contains 30 Items with closed and semi-open questions which have been defined on basis of a literature review. In addition, rating scales are used to collect the degree of consent of respondents. An even number of response categories was chosen to cause a tendency of the participants. Evaluation of the survey was carried out by methods of descriptive statistics. Thus, frequencies and significances can be presented. The calculation of error probability was carried out on the 95% level. A p-value between 0.000 and 0.01 is considered as highly significant, values between 0.01 and 0.05 are significant and between 0.05 and 0.1 scarcely significant.

Research Sample

In order to find indicators of acceptance by supervisors, more than 1,700 managers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland were asked about their perceptions. As a first step a division by position into lower and middle management level (e.g. area, department, group/team management, without employee responsibility) and top management level (e.g. general management, board of directors) was made. After revision of the data, 1,484 questionnaires could be used. 535 persons held a position in the top management level and 949 persons are located in lower and middle management.

Table 1 - Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>38,3%</td>
<td>22,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>34,6%</td>
<td>34,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>15,3%</td>
<td>22,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-/Team Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
<td>11,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without employee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>6,1%</td>
<td>8,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprising, the proportion of women in the study was only 10%, with twice as many women being in the lower and middle management level (12%) as opposed to the top management level (6%). This already shows that the relationship between gender and management position is statistically highly significant (p = 0.000). Moreover, in comparison to male participants, women are significantly more likely to be single and to have no children (p = 0.000).

Results

To find out how acceptance of managers is experienced in lower and middle management as well as how persons in top management levels show acceptance towards their subordinates, indicators for acceptance were asked. As a result, managers in lower and middle management positions mainly choose "communication at eye-level" (58%), "freedom to work independently" (51%) and "recognition (e.g. positive feedback, etc.)" (33%). Managers from top management positions indicate most frequently that they show acceptance by "transparency in strategic orientation" (53%), "communication at eye-level" (43%) and
"recognition (eg. positive feedback, etc.)" (43%). Even if two of the three most frequently cited indicators are similar, communication on eye level is more important to managers in lower and middle management (+15%). Moreover, there is a significant difference between women and men in lower and middle management considering the sign "Sharing on information which is important for career advancement" (p = 0.020). Women are significantly more likely to see the transfer of career-relevant information as a sign of acceptance (34.2%) compared to men (24.2%). There is no difference in response behaviour between female and male managers in top positions.

Q: „I experience acceptance through my supervisor due to “ (n= 932); Managers from Middle and lower management „As a leader I show acceptance through “ (n=545); Managers from top management; Multiple answers possible

In response to the question "In my current company, the acceptance of a manager is being created by ..." executives from the top management level indicated "social skills" significantly more often (85%) than lower and middle management executives (63%). In addition, the factors "achievement" (95% vs. 80%) and "professional competences" (95% vs. 81%) are mentioned by managers from the top management level more frequently. Again, the response behavior of women and men in the top management level hardly differs. Looking at the responses of women and men in the lower and middle management level, differences appear. For instance, women indicate significantly more often "presence in the workplace" (67% vs. 53%) and "availability (by telephone, email, 24/7)" (67% vs. 53%) than men in comparable positions. On the other hand, male executives significantly indicate more often "performance" (86% vs. 75%), "professional competence" (87% vs. 77%), and "social skills" (73% vs. 52%).
Further interesting results can be drawn from the question of how female and male executives perceive their career opportunities in the company. Among the managers in lower and middle management positions, a highly significant relationship is shown by gender ($p = 0.000$). Women assume that building a career is easier for men (70% vs. 32%), whereas male executives are more likely to assume equal opportunities (57% vs. 29%). Interestingly, there is hardly any difference among women and men in top management level. Thus, 74% female and 77% male participants of the top management claim that men and women can make a career equally well.

Q: „In my current company, the acceptance of a manager is being created by ... “ (n= 932) ; Managers from Middle and lower management; Multiple answers possible

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Q: „In my company…“ (n=939); Managers from Middle and lower management
As mentioned above, specific support from higher management is a crucial factor to create gender equality in management positions. Asked for whether or not top management promotes gender equality interesting answers occur. Thus, 51% of the women and men from top management level agree that the company’s board of management promotes equality between women and men. A total of 23% of women and 16% of men even claim not to know if the top management level is actively promoting the issue of equality. In addition, the answers to the question of the instruments used to promote equal opportunities in the company differ by gender and position. For instance, male executives of the top management level indicate “Commitment of the management board” more often (82%), than women in the same position (67%). Interestingly, women from the lower and middle management (80%) also indicate this measure significantly more often than men in the same position (70%). On the other hand, men from the lower and middle management chose “Transparency in recruitment” more often compared to women (49% vs. 27%).

Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to detect observable behaviours that show acceptance towards female and male executives. In addition, several factors that might indicate an acceptance towards female managers were analysed. Generally, significant differences between women and men exist mainly within middle and lower management levels. Women and men in top management hardly differ in their response behaviour. However, communication on eye-level and recognition seem to be shared indicators of acceptance between several hierarchy levels. Nevertheless, the indicator “Sharing on information which is important for career advancement” occurs as an essential indicator for women in middle and lower management. Moreover, women in the middle and lower hierarchy are more likely to see their presence and availability as a promoter of acceptance within the company. Female and male executives from the top management level, as well as male executives from the lower and middle management, mostly select competences, skills and performance as attributes that create acceptance within companies. In addition, experienced and communicated signs of acceptance differ between management levels, but also between women and men. Women in the middle and lower management assume significantly more often that men are more likely to have a career, while male executives at the same level assume that men and women have equal career opportunities. Furthermore, “Commitment of the management board” is chosen mostly by women in the lower and middle management and by men in the top management positions as a measure to establish gender equality.

Limitations

It is important to be aware of potential limitations. First, data is based on self-report measures collected at a single point in time. Thus, issues such as respondent consistency and styles, as well as common method bias can occur. Further factors can also limit the generalisability of results. Unfortunately, the female sample size was low. Therefore it is not possible to extent the results to the whole population. Moreover, the participants are a selected sample as the panel of the consulting company Odgers & Berndtson was used. Second, as the data is cross-sectional, causal inferences cannot be made.


Fake news? Sexual harassment and attacks as causes of failure in midwife retention in rural Cambodia*

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1. Background

In the poor South East Asian country of Cambodia, women’s status ranks 112 among 144 countries; aspects of their lives such as education, income, so forth lag much behind men (World Economic Forum 2016)\(^1\). Although over the last 15 years the Cambodian government has succeeded in reducing their nation’s maternal mortality ratio, further reductions are still necessary (WHO 2015)\(^2\). Most deliveries take place at health facilities with skilled birth attendants, not at women’s homes with traditional birth attendants. One of the factors that contributed to this reduction was the increase in the number of midwives, particularly in rural areas\(^3\). The increase in the number of midwives has made possible for every Health Centre (HC)\(^4\) to at least one primary midwife.

This coverage was supported by the local system of recruitment of midwifery students (Fujita et al. 2012)\(^5\), implemented in response to the severe shortage of midwives in remote rural regions. Cambodian families avoid allowing their daughters to leave their parents’ home before they get married, this was a gender\(^6\) norm. This norm was also applicable to daughters who were pursuing midwifery education or subsequent work, which may have required the daughters to stay away from home. The local recruitment system managed the local education of midwifery students and then the local deployment of those who graduated as midwives within one of four regions. The deployments have been made to provinces in a region. The rapid economic growth in Cambodia over recent years has also contributed to this (Fujita et al. 2012)\(^7\).

Under the conditions of the local recruitment system, however, newly recruited midwives come to know which HC they will be deployed to only after they have passed the recruitment examination. This is because the examination is for obtaining a civil post at the Ministry of Health (MOH) and not a post at a specific HC. When a midwife takes the examination, she indicates that she is applying to a province, or more correctly, to the Provincial Health Department (PHD) of the province. After the examination, each PHD deploys successful examinees to vacant posts. However, it has been unclear how the PHD decides who should be deployed to which specific HC.

To reduce the maternal mortality rate further, the retention of secondary midwives in rural areas is necessary (MOH 2010)\(^8\). Their qualification is higher than those of primary midwives. Literature has pointed out influential factors for the retention of midwives who are not specifically secondary midwives. The influential factors included advice and encouragement from their superiors (JICA 2009)\(^9\), the shortage of resources and bad physical conditions in health facilities (Willis-Shattuck et al. 2008)\(^10\) and their salaries being lower than those of non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers (Sherratt et al. 2006)\(^11\). In rural Cambodia, houses for rent rarely exist (Abe 2014)\(^12\); in fact, no housing allowances are paid either in cash...
or in kind to health staff (MOH 2016). However, at the field level, rumours have surfaced that midwives living separately from their parents or spouses suffer from ‘security issues’—i.e., from sexual harassment and sexual attacks—that are disturbing factors that affect midwife retention. It appears that these widespread stories give rise to anxiety among the stakeholders responsible for midwife retention; the stakeholders believe their anxiety over the secondary midwives, and their hesitation to deploy them is reasonable because the midwives are women. However, the seriousness of the issues is unknown, while their understanding, attitudes and actions with regard to the security issues are suggestive of Butler’s concept of gender performativity (Butler 1999).

In Cambodian, gender norms put women in lower, disadvantaged, or marginalised positions relative to men, especially in education, health, livelihood and legal settings (USAID 2006). Domestic violence against women prevails, particularly in intimate relationships. Cambodia legally prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Getting married is thought to be essential for women in Cambodia (USAID 2006). Most marriages are arranged by parents and relatives (LeVine 2010; Demont & Heuvelin 2008); marriages arranged by parents and relatives dominate the lives of children who are above a certain age (Luco 2020). Only women are required to maintain their virginity before marriage; and marriage ranks married women higher than unmarried women and hence marginalises unmarried women (UNIFEM, WB, ADB, UNDP and DFID/UK. 2004).

However, due to economic growth, women’s presence and economic contributions have become outstanding; in fact, most factory workers in Phnom Penh are young women, young women who came from rural areas—as well as their families—to pursue cash-income employment opportunities in the garment and footwear industries, Cambodia’s leading industries. However, a wage gap between women and men doing the same job has remained persistently high (ILO, 2012). The growing share of female workers in the labour market has brought the added expectation to—burden on—women to not only carry out their new productive role but to do so while conducting their old ‘reproductive’ role as well (Bell Hooks, 2000).

Incidents of sexual violence are often under-reported and differences in legal definitions and data collection methodologies for the incidents burrs cross-nation comparisons (UN Women 2015). The level of under-reporting in Cambodia was regarded as critical under the circumstances that certain violence against women is considered acceptable (Amnesty 2010). Losing one’s virginity before marriage—even if raped—shames a daughter’s family, for she is now considered unsuitable for marriage; moreover, rape victims are stigmatised as the ones who provoked the rape (LICADHO 2006).

2. Study objectives and research questions

Given the needs and the circumstances for deploying secondary midwives, this paper aims to explore how stories of sexual harassment and attacks on women affect the deployment and retention of secondary midwives deployed to HCs in rural Cambodia. To explore this, we ask the following research questions:

1) What are the mechanisms and the current situation for deployment of secondary midwives to HCs in rural areas which have connections with midwife retention?

2) What are the stories of ‘security issues’ (i.e., sexual harassment and sexual attacks on secondary midwives) and why were they told?

3) What are the causes for midwives’ leaving the HC they were deployed to?
The reader should bear in mind that this exploration is a part of a broader study on influential factors relating to midwife retention and it is based on the first-stage interviews, which is to be followed by the second-stage interviews. The second stage intends to deepen the understanding of stories of the midwives.

3. Methods

Qualitative interviews (McLeod 2003) in the form of key informant interviews were conducted in Kampong Cham Province and Phnom Penh to explore stories relating to midwives’ ‘security issues’, issues that appeared to influence the deployment and retention of secondary midwives in rural areas.

- Six groups of the key informants were strategically selected by referring to the framework of system development for human resource for health in low and middle-income countries, i.e., the house model (Fujita et al. 2012). Table below shows the key informants by group, attributes, and the number. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 key informants concerning midwife retention. We also selected eight mothers as key-informants from rural villages who had a delivery in the last 12 months and had been assisted by midwives. They presumably had the closest relation with midwives in the community and that relation was significant to the midwives (Sandall 1995). We conducted in-depth interviews with them.
Interview questions were developed by referring to a conceptual framework for potential influential factors on secondary midwife retention. We established our framework based on our literature review, and we included the anxiety about ‘security issues’ heard from and rumoured by MOH staff and DP staff between 2008 and 2015.32

All interviewees were asked about stories relating to:
- Incidents of security issues relating to women in the community and midwives working for the HC;
- Stories of community people’s responses to a young female who moved into a community and hence was living separately from her parents/family; and
- Secondary midwives’ retention.

Additionally, the following questions were the main questions to each of the 6 groups.

Group 1) recent national trends of midwife deployment, deployment mechanism,

Group 2) secondary midwives’ preferences for their working-places, their attitudes for career development

Group 3) situations and mechanism of local deployment, midwife attitudes for career development, issues in their work,

Group 4) issues in midwife work and those with the community, midwife working arrangement at the HC

Group 5) issues in midwife work and those with the community

Group 6) women’s experience of receiving care by midwives at HC

These interviewees were informed about the scope and purpose of this study and signed the consent form, indicating that they consented to their participation in this study.

Each interview took one to 1.5 hours. For those who spoke only Khmer, interviews were conducted in Khmer. A Cambodian female translator translated the English I spoke. During all the interviews, notes were taken33 and voices recordings were done. To ensure the accuracy of the translation, the content of the English part of the transcripts were compared with the Khmer part and checked for differences by the translator; the interviewer clarified the meaning of translation using the notes. We used hermeneutic phenomenology (Lopez and Willis 2004),34 which was also partly influenced by discourse analysis, in analysing the transcripts. For the text coding and analysis, we used Nvivo 10. This study obtained ethics approval from the National Ethics Committee for Health Research of the Ministry of Health, Cambodia and Meiji Gakuin University.
4. Result

4.1 Deployments to a health centre

The MOH announces only the number of civil posts in recruitment of secondary midwives in each province, but not the names of the HCs to which they will be deployed. The PHD has the authority to manage personnel, including the deployment of midwives to HCs or hospitals in the province. Thus, at the time of the MOH examination, secondary midwives who take the examination do not know which HC they will be deployed to (GO1). When a midwife takes the MOH examination, she indicates that she is applying to a specific province, more correctly, to its PHD. Also, applicants to the examination must apply to a province within the region where they studied midwifery (GO1, OD1).

The number of annual graduates from midwifery courses in the public and the private sector has been increasing mainly because of increases in the number of private training schools of midwifery (MOH 2015). As a result, competition among applicants to the positions in the MOH recruitment has been intensifying (GO3). Searching for a position in NGOs, instead of a position at a HC, rarely occurred among newly graduated midwives. Since, working as a government official in rural areas holds different benefits, although government salaries for midwives may be lower than salaries for NGO workers: job security, convenient and easy living with parents and a relaxed (less competitive) working environment, especially when compared to working for an NGO. (DP1, DP2, NGO3).

Due to intense competition in the government recruitment, some secondary midwife applicants applied to the provinces that were recruiting a larger number of positions but that were not their home provinces, in order to increase their opportunities to obtain a position (OD1, HC3).

Some positions were unpopular among the applicants due to the remoteness and rural geographical location of some provinces; these were filled through drawing lots among the midwives who had succeeded the examination but whose place of deployment was not decided (GO3). Midwives are able to request for transfer to a new location and their requests are accepted under the civil servant law; however, transfers are decided by the PHD (GO1).

Therefore, the deployment mechanism and the current situation were highly likely to result in situation where some young secondary midwives were deployed to HCs in rural areas where they needed to live separately from their parents or families, which is against the gender norms in Cambodia.

4.2 ‘Security issues’ affecting the secondary midwives’ deployment and retention

Only one incident of the security issues was reported by one of our 17 interviewees, but it was neither on secondary midwives nor other female health staff. The case was one on a mentally disabled woman, perhaps more vulnerable than other women. This rarity indicated the security level was not responsible for the negative rumours. However, there may have been some security issues.

I have never heard of security problems even in other places. (HCC1)

No robbery and no raping in this area. (HCC3)

No security problem against women and health staff here. (Mter3)
However, the interviewees persistently mentioned concerns about security issues on the midwives (HCC1~4, FV2, FV3)

I think (midwife’s living by herself) will be difficult...travelling at night. It is always a concern over security problems, although we never heard of any security problems. (Mter3)

A story of a mentally disabled woman living by herself in a rural area, as narrated by key informants, represented women’s intensified difficulties, constructed by gender and disability discrimination\textsuperscript{38} in Cambodia. People in the community were suspicious of her, because she was living by herself; hence, she gained a bad reputation as a ‘bad woman’ (Mtr3), with many believing that she deserved to receive sexual harassment or even be attacked (through being cheated on or by any other means). Furthermore, she was blamed as the cause of the incident.

One woman (who was living by herself) got pregnant without husband, ... The woman has some mental problems. ...A small proportion of the community pitied her. But the majority blamed her. (FV2)

However, another story about a woman living by herself was different. If she came to the community to serve the community, or came with the clear and known purpose of working, like a secondary midwife, then the key informants maintained that such a woman would not get a bad reputation in the community (need interviewees).

Yet, a secondary midwife living by herself was unimaginable to the interviewees; the major premise among them was that she should live at a house where the owner’s family lived. That said, even if she was known to the community as a midwife, she might still face potential difficulties in her living, including security issues.

Yes, it’s difficult if she lives with a family that isn’t kind or a family that consists of many bad men. (OD1).

Therefore, the ‘appropriate’ accommodation for a midwife was necessary. Stories of young secondary midwives settling down in ‘appropriate’ accommodations well illuminated the gender performativity as described by Butler (1999)\textsuperscript{39}. When a midwife was deployed to a community, actions were taken to avoid the second difficulty. People surrounding her at the community level worked without requests or orders from the PHD or the MOH.

I needed to provide support to the MW to find a place, like finding a family with no sons, no men, for the MW(’s staying there). (HCC3)

(The house belongs to) an elderly woman, living with her grandchildren, (they are) female... (HCC3)
After this, the HC Chief continued to talk about what he had done, despite never having been asked. He introduced the secondary midwife to the villagers, to the village chief and to the village police at village meetings in the community (HC). He made it known that she was a good woman with good intentions, not a ‘bad’ woman.

The story of a midwife’s boarding at a ‘female only house’ for ‘protection’ presented that she was involved in a situation similar to that of physical spatial confinement, due to her being a woman. This story also indicated the midwife’s following of gender norms restricting her mobility.

...during the day time, she stays at the HC, at night, she moves, sleeps at the same villager’s house’.

For cooking and eating, she cooks own food at this HC. So she just went (goes) to sleep at the villager’s house. (HCC3)

Some newly graduated secondary midwives did not move to the areas that they were deployed to, but instead continued to stay at their parents’ houses and commuted. However, due to security concerns, some of them have been excluded from on-call duties during nights, a decision made only at the HC level. Instead of them, other health centre staff responded to the on-calls. Due to security concerns, some other secondary midwives, during night calls, were always accompanied by a family member of the woman on their way to the HC for her delivery.

Despite these voluntary actions made by these persons and the midwife herself, these persons thought that it was inevitable in future for her to leave the HC (HCC1, HCC3), for the midwife was not living with their family and her situation was opposing to the Cambodian gender norm.

(I)t is difficult to retain, because they want to return to their hometown. (HCC3)

Fears of ‘security issues’ relating to daughters were persistent; parents do not want their daughters to live separately from them, for she may lose her virginity (UNIFEM et al. 200).

As you know MWs are female. If those MWs are not yet married, their parents often do not encourage them to stay in such a place. (OD1).

Parents showed their concerns, even if their daughters were working for international NGOs in Cambodia, wherein daughters were supposed to make overnight business trips in and sometimes outside Cambodia (NGO3). Their concerns quoted above contradicted their daughters’ ambitious characteristics (DP2, NGO1). However, this contrasts strikingly with job-seeking behaviours of some of young female NGO workers, who job-hop, hoping to get better work with a higher salary or to become a manager (NGO3).

4.3 Burden of marriage on wives

Marriage dominate women’s life in Cambodia was described above. It has also greatly influenced the professional life of some secondary midwives. It was reported that some of them get married between
the completion of their midwifery education and their deployment. Their new linkages post-marriage may cause them to apply to a province where their husbands are from, different from their home province. However, because of the deployment mechanism explained above, some of them ended up being deployed to an HC in a community that was neither their husband’s home community nor had any linkage with them. They were thus required to live separately from their husband and repeatedly went back and forth between the places where they worked and the places where their husbands lived. (OD1, HCC1).

Living in this situation put them into a dilemma because the expectations from women to play dual roles—productive and reproductive—put burden on these midwives (So et al. 2016). Furthermore, the gender norms that spread the perception and a kind of consensus among people around them that these midwives cannot help leaving their HC, i.e., getting transferred to another HC in the community where their husbands were living, was shared among people.

4.5 Women who received midwifery care and secondary midwife retention

Women who had deliveries at the HCs were asked about their experiences about receiving care from secondary midwives. Their experiences occurred mostly during their visits for antenatal care, not at deliveries. Their interactions with the secondary midwives tended to be limited, partly because most of the women preferred midwives who had long experience (Mtrs1 to 7.). The women’s stories were filled with what happened to their priorities for better health services. It seemed that in their stories, issues concerning the secondary midwives’ retention in their communities were issues that affected the availability of midwifery services to them (Mtr4). They seemed to be less sympathetic to the difficulties faced by the secondary midwives caused by deployment.

I understand it could be difficult for the secondary midwife to live separately from her family, but it is her own family problem. It’s her duty to stay here to provide services at this HC’. (Mtr4)

5. Discussion and conclusion

The current recruitment mechanism of MOH health staff involves uncertainty and it has caused problematic situations for some of the young secondary midwives. It is significant that uncertainty is orchestrated with gender performativity (Butler 1999), as shown in the stories of interviewees. Gender performativity concerning marriage and being a good daughter are understood to frame their application choices regarding where they work and bring in the dual burden (Hooks 2000) or other difficulties for them. The gender performativity seemed to give impetus to those midwives who were deployed to an unwanted HC to request for transfer from it to a more desirable HC, ending the retention of the midwife at the former HC. It is plausible that before the transfer, their working at an unwanted HC would undermine their motivation. These outcomes would go against the MOH’s policy intent, as well as the need for midwifery services in rural areas.

The rumours, attitudes and behaviours over ‘security issues’ have been constructed by gender performativity (Butler 1999) in the persons who were supposed to be supporting and helping the retention of secondary midwives and in the secondary midwives being burdened by sharing of these rumours, attitudes and behaviours. Although I am not suggesting that there were no security issues and risks or no possibility of hidden security incidents, the security level was not responsible for secondary midwives’ leaving the HCs to which they were deployed. Overthrowing the discourse concerning the ‘security issue’ seems to be beyond the reach of conventional policy measures for health workers’
retention by the MOH, such as housing allowances which have not been introduced yet. Nevertheless, this study recommends MOH to provide the midwives who are deployed to rural (not their home community) HCs with accommodations (in kind or cash).

One shortcoming here is that there were a limited number of provinces examined to understand the recruitment mechanisms by PHDs.

3 This serious shortage of midwives is partly due to the massacres carried out by the Pol Pot regime.
4 Each health centre covers 10,000 to 20,000 people across several villages.
6 Judith Butler maintains that “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” in Butler “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity”, Routledge, New York, (Anniversary edition 1999), p. 25.
7 See the endnote 5.
17 Article 172 of the Cambodian Labour Law.
18 See the endnote 11.


22 The woman in this case was multi-burdened because of her mental disability.

23 See the endnote 14.

24 During the term the author participate in a development and research projects and visited Cambodia. Personal communication, anonyms.

25 The note included the interviewer’s observations about the interviewees’ (appearances of) difficulty understanding or replying to an interview question, facial expressions, etc.

26 The first-stage interviews were conducted in February in 2017 as the first Japanese fiscal year study; the second-stage interviews in mid-August in 2017 as the second Japanese fiscal year study.

27 See the endnote 5.

28 See endnote 24.


30 It is possible that incidents of sexual harassment get little recognition as harassment in the Cambodian society due to the low awareness of gender issues. People do not recognize “violence by gender stereotype” because “most of us eventually conform to the gender norms” Riki Wilchins, Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer, Magnus Books, New York, 2004. P.115. No written materials about street harassment cases in Cambodia have been found by the author however, according to Cambodian female NGO staff working for NGO gender projects, Cambodian women and girls experience unwanted shouts or following, groping, etc. by men on the streets (personal contacts, August 2017).
Labour Rights
(Female Construction Workers in Cambodia)

By Vichuta Ly
Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW)
Cambodia

Background

Attitude Towards Women and Girls in Cambodian Society

In traditional Cambodian (Khmer) gender norms, strong emphasis is placed on the allocation of power and authority to men, with the expectation that they shall be responsible for the welfare of their families and communities.

A common Cambodian proverb is “Waterfalls always flow from top to bottom and never from bottom to top”. In other words, social hierarchy, which includes a lower status attributed to women, is the natural order of things and not to be challenged. Hierarchy is reflected in the code of conduct for Cambodian women called “Chbab Srey”, which expects girls and women to stay home, look after the household, and be unobtrusive. The code discourages female from travelling or moving, staying single, or accepting jobs of status superior to their husbands. This is illustrated in the proverb: “Women don’t dive deep or travel far”.

There is a widespread belief, even among women, that girls do not need as much education as boys. This is particularly true in rural areas, where over 80 percent of the population lives. Elder daughters may face social and/or parental pressure to quit school to help their families, while their brothers continue their education to prepare for being the head of a household.1

While progress is being made, gender attitudes enshrined in “Chbab Srey” remain obstacles to achieving gender equality in all aspect of social, economic and political life. Perceptions of gender equality and women’s rights are changing, particularly among younger women and in higher income groups and urban areas, influenced by initiatives from the government, media and civil society organization.2

Employment

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1 GOC 2010, National Strategic Development Update 2009-2013
2 Cambodian Constitution Law, p.540, 2016
Female Construction Workers

In 2016, Cambodia is much wealthier and has move up in the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP’s) economic classifications of countries, from “lower” to “lower-middle income”. Cambodia’s construction industry is booming, and high-rises are being built across the capital of Phnom Penh. With the city population doubling over the past four years, it has begun its transformation into a sprawling metropolis. Fast growth rate, modernization, and industrialization has led to a boom in the construction industry in the recent past. The total value of construction projects (hotels, apartment, luxury condos and high-rise commercial buildings) rose to almost 5 billions dollars in the first half of the years, an increase of 27 percent over the same period last year, according to data released in last July by the Land Management Ministry. A total of 1,523 construction projects worth 4.9 billion dollars and covering 7.2 million square meters were approved from January to the end of June, compared to 1,183 projects worth 3.8 billion dollars given the green light over the same period last years.

The industry employs between 175,000 and 200,000 workers, a large number of migrant workers who flock to the capital in search of work. Many whom are unskilled and work informally as day labourers. An estimated that as many as one in three construction workers are female. Some of the women are just starting out, others hone skills learnt in the provinces, while other are from the masses of workers who returned from Thailand in 2014 and recently in 2017, after a crackdown on illegal migrant workers. Many of these women have come to the capital with their family and friends, relocating to live and work on the building sites. The sites can often be dangerous and female workers receive lower wages that their male counterparts.

Despite this, the women of Cambodia’s construction industry are hard-working and driven, remaining resilient to the risks they face; limited workplace protections provided by construction companies and limited access to protection by the law. However, for women these problems are exacerbated by social norms which undervalue their contribution, lead to less pay, security and opportunities for work progression and training, place additional family responsibilities on them, and give them less social capacity to voice up their concerns and advocate for their rights.

Occupational health and safety (OHS) standards in the workplace often lack effective enforcement mechanisms and do not take into account the specific needs of female workers. Inadequate childcare provisions often mean women have the added responsibility of monitoring young children while they work, leading to potential dangerous situations. Sexual harassment and intimate partner violence have also been reported.

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3 Human Development Report 2016, published for the UNDP
4 Different kind of buildings: residential, commercial, warehouse and religious buildings
5 The Cambodia Daily, July 17, 2017
7 Cambodia ratified ILO Conventions
International Convention

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 and Cambodia ratified it in 1992. The aim of the Convention is to uphold human rights, equality and promote equal access to opportunities for women. Countries that have ratified must take measures to comply with the Convention and produce a report every four years to highlight how they have complied. The Member States are also required to set up mechanisms to support women’s rights to the fullest.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the core of CEDAW. It requires equality in all spectrums including education, employment, political, social, economic, cultural fields, marriage, and family life.

In Cambodia, The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW), monitors the implementation of CEDAW.

Equal Rights

Under the ICCPR, states are required “to provide for equality between men and women in the enjoyment of all Covenant rights”. In General Comment No. 28, the Committee highlights the indivisibility of all human rights by declaring the important impact of this article on the enjoyment by women of the human rights protected under the Covenant. Furthermore, this Covenant requires parties to review their legislation and practices and take the lead in implementing all measures necessary to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all fields.

In concert with this, the CEDAW Convention, which Cambodia ratified, provides that “states parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate and condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women”. The state obliges to “modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view of achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotypes roles for men and women”.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia “recognize(s) and respect(s) human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women’s and children’s rights”.

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8 ICCPR, article 3  
9 ICCPR, article 26  
10 CEDAW, article 2  
11 CEDAW, article 5  
12 Cambodian Constitution, article 31
Constitution also stated that “all forms of discrimination against women should be abolished”. Despite of that, the concluding observation on the fourth and fifth periodic report of Cambodia, commends “the State party for its efforts to revise school curricula and textbooks with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes, the Committee remain concerned that the Chbab Srey, the traditional code of conduct for Khmer women, is deeply rooted in Cambodian culture and continues to define everyday life in the society based on stereotypical roles of women and men in the family and in the society”. While the General Recommendation No. 25 explains that such standards and norms prohibit discrimination on the ground of sex and protect both men and women from treatment based on arbitrary, unfair and/or unjustifiable distinctions, the Convention focuses on discrimination against women, emphasizing that women have suffered and continue to suffer from various forms of discrimination because they are women”.

Right to Employment

The labor rights protected by the ICESCR are stated in Part III of the Covenant. The right to work, which is included the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work, which she freely chooses or accepts. The Committee has furthermore included the right to enter employment and the right not to be unjustly deprived of employment to this term. On the other hand, recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favorable conditions of work, the right to the equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence. The right to access to employment and the right promotion opportunities are thus protected in the ICESCR, in relation to which the principle this covenant can operate.

The equality principle provided for in CEDAW is not limited to the rights included in its substantive provisions. Employment related rights do however enjoy special protection in Part III of the Convention. The Convention requires States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment, in order to ensure the same rights in employment on a basis of equality of men and women and the right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment.

13 Cambodian Constitution, article 45, par. 1
14 Adopted by the Committee at its fifty-sixth session (September 30 to October 18, 2013)
15 Concluding observations on the fourth and fifth periodic report of Cambodia (Par. 18)
16 ICESCR, article 6
17 CEDAW, article 11 (1)
18 CEDAW, article 11 par. 2
As agreed upon in the UN Charter, the International Labor Organization is one of the UN’s Specialized Agencies. The contribution of the ILO will therefore be discussed here among the UN documents.

The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) ILO Convention (No. 111) and Recommendation (No. 111) were adopted in 1958 in order to put the principle of nondiscrimination of the ILO Constitution into effect. The Convention is among the most widely ratified conventions and has provided inspiration for the subsequently adopted treaties regarding discrimination. It prohibits direct as well as indirect discrimination and must be applied in both public and private employment. Whereas CEDAW concentrates on discrimination against women and girls in every field, the ILO Convention protects all persons but limits its scope to acts which affect equality of opportunity or treatment in the field of employment or occupation.

The Convention places emphasis on the positive aspect of equal treatment and opportunities and obliges member states to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote and practice such equality in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to the elimination of any discrimination thereof. To this end, States are required to seek the co-operation of employers’ and workers’ organizations in implementing the policy, to enact legislation in support of such policy, to repeal and modify statutory provisions and administrative practices inconsistent with the policy, and to apply it to employment under the direct control of a national authority. The Convention’s equality principle must, as noted earlier, be applied in both public and private employment. Although the assurance of immediate application only applies to employment under the direct control of a national authority, positive measures towards the attainment of equality of opportunity and treatment must be taken in both fields. The national policy designed for these purposes is to be pursued by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice. If legislation is among the appropriate methods in a field covered by the convention, legislation should be enacted. Laws and traditions may be suitable methods for other matters.

Distinctions, exclusions or preferences based on the inherent requirements of a particular job are not considered discrimination within the meaning of the convention. As an exception clause, the ILO supervisory bodies follow this provision strictly. In the assessment of whether a job requirement involves grounds of discrimination is acknowledged as a valid justification, each case, will be considered individually to assess whether the limitation is proportionate to the aim pursued. In spite of these criteria it remains difficult to estimate the exact extent to which limitations of this kind will be considered legitimate, as the standard may depend on the ground of discrimination involved. Distinctions based on sex have been considered legitimate ground for distinction, especially for employment activities, which involves high degree of physical effort. With increasing demands for equal opportunity and freedom of choice of employment, such distinctions measures, have been much debated and are declining. This is due to the fact that

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19 UN Charter, articles 57 and 63
20 ILO convention 111, article 2
21 ILO convention 111, article 3
22 ILO convention 111, article 1 (a)
23 The interpretation of Article 1(2) has been developed in ILO case law. Most cases have related to political opinion and religion. Nielsen H.K., The concept Book, p. 846.
such measures may result in direct or indirect discrimination against women, as it has made many jobs inaccessible for women. The development in this field has been rapid\textsuperscript{24} and the supervisory organs of the ILO have frequently drawn countries’ attention to the need to review their justifications in national legislation.

ILO Convention No. 111 and Recommendation No. 111 do not express the matter of affirmative action or positive preferences.\textsuperscript{25} However, the supervisory organs of the ILO have indicated that they intend to examine the validity of these systems on a case-by-case basis. In doing so they will identify those which aim to ensure a fair degree of proportional representation in employment and those which aim to promote the advancement of groups previously disadvantaged in certain activities.\textsuperscript{26}

The Cambodian Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to both men and women in the terms of employment.\textsuperscript{27} In general, all employees in Cambodia are covered by the Labour Codes. Nevertheless, the Labor Code of Cambodia (1997) in effect discriminates against women by inequality, especially regarding wages and job allocation for women construction workers from nearly all of the labor protections afforded to other workers.\textsuperscript{28}

**Right to Maternity Leave**

Pregnancy-related discrimination was key concern for women workers in Cambodia.

The concept of men and women being subject to the same selection criteria has however been criticized for failing to take account of relevant differences. As pregnancy or maternity status do not related to men that they cannot be applied as gender neutral criterion when hiring employees.

These shortcomings bring up the question whether the Convention provides adequate protection against an employer’s refusal to employ or promote a woman, or deny her job application or promotion during maternity leave or pregnancy. However one must keep in mind that the aim of the Convention is to eliminate discrimination in the field of employment.\textsuperscript{29} Furthermore, the scope of the Convention is not limited to the rights it explicitly recognizes. Employment rights is clearly does not exclude the protection of related rights.\textsuperscript{30} In this respect, the protection provided

\textsuperscript{24} Rossillion C., ILO standard, p. 27  
\textsuperscript{25} As opposed to the 1975 Declaration on equality for women workers, which states that "Positive special treatment during a transitional period aimed at effective equality between the sexes shall not be regarded as discriminatory."  
\textsuperscript{27} Cambodian Constitution article 36  
\textsuperscript{28} Cambodian Labor Code article 1 (e)  
\textsuperscript{29} CEDAW article 11  
\textsuperscript{30} CEDAW article 11 par. 2 (a to d)
by CEDAW might therefore be stronger than the above criticism suggests, although its strength depend on the implementation mechanism provided in the end.

Furthermore, promotion and job assignment during maternity leave do not enjoy the same protection conferred upon seniority and job security. In the absence of explicit prohibition of discrimination on these grounds, the danger of using pregnancy or maternity as a pretext for gender discrimination may not be avoided.

Discrimination against pregnant workers takes various forms during different stages of the employment process, including recruitment, promotion, and dismissal, and included failure to make reasonable workplace accommodations to address the needs of pregnant workers. Cambodia’s Constitution and the Labor Code forbid dismissals based on pregnancy. The Labor Code also guarantees all pregnant workers three months’ maternity leave irrespective of the duration of service during which maternity pay is entitled to half of their wage, including benefit and paid by the employer. However, women on maternity leave are eligible for wage benefits only when they have one year of uninterrupted service. This result in remaining discrimination against women and restricted their access to rights and benefits.

Working Condition

Another issue affecting women is sexual harassment at the workplace. Labor rights activists and NGOs confirmed that sexual harassment in construction workplace is common. CARE defines GBV as any harm perpetrated against a person’s will based on gender. Labour Code requires employers and managers of establishments which employ women to watch over their good behaviour and maintain their decency. The term “good behaviour” is not defined. The article forbids sexual harassment but does not define nor elaborate on the elements nor provide any reference as to its implementation. Furthermore, it is not clear if the employer is vicariously liable for the acts of employees. Issues about liability through negligence or creation of hostile work environments should also be clarified.

Cambodian criminal Code states that sexual harassment is punishable by an imprisonment of between 6 days to 3 months and a fine of between 100,000 and 500,000 Riel. It defines sexual harassment as “…an act that a person abuses the power which was vested to him/her in his/her functions in order to put pressure again and again on other persons in exchange for sexual favour”.

31 CEDAW article 11 par. 2 (b)
32 Meron, T., The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women,
33 Cambodian Constitution, article 46, par. 2
34 Cambodian Labor Code, article 182 par. 3
35 Cambodian Labor Code, article 183 par. 1
36 Cambodian Labor Code, article 183 par. 4
37 Cambodian Labor Code, article 172
38 Criminal Code 2009, article 250
The forms of sexual harassment that women recounted include sexual comments and advances, inappropriate touching, pinching, and bodily contact. Workers complained about both managers and male co-workers.\(^{39}\)

The gravity of the General Recommendation 19, comment on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a stark reminder that most of the world’s working women continue to remain at the lower end of a segregated labor market and are concentrated in a few occupations.\(^{40}\) It begins with a statement:

“That equality in employment can be seriously impaired when women are subjected to gender-specific violence such as sexual harassment in the work-place”.

The General Recommendation 19 definition of sexual harassment broadly mirrors statutory definitions, which have been incorporated into existing sex discrimination acts in a number of State parties’ national legislatures.

“Sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behavior as physical contact and advances, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography and sexual demand, whether by words or actions. Such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem; it is discriminatory when the women has reasonable grounds to believe that her objection would disadvantage her in connection with her employment, including recruitment or promotion, or when it creates a hostile atmosphere”.

General Recommendation 19 taken into account of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The Comment makes clear that “gender based violence” is a nullification of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which includes: “the right to just and favorable conditions of work”.\(^{45}\)

“Gender based violence, which impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms under general international law or human rights conventions, is discrimination within the meaning of the Convention.\(^{46}\) These rights and freedoms include: the right to just and favorable conditions of work”.\(^{42}\)

Underlining the breadth of the CEDAW Conventions application,\(^{48}\) emphasizing that discrimination under the convention is not restricted to action by or on behalf of Governments. For example the CEDAW convention calls on State parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise.\(^{43}\) Under general international law and specific human rights covenants, States may also be responsible

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\(^{39}\) LSCW case report
\(^{40}\) UN stats report, page 1
\(^{41}\) General Recommendation 19, including Australia, Canada, US, UK, EU Community Law. \(^{45}\) ICESR article 7 (h) \(^{46}\) ICESR article 1
\(^{42}\) The right to just and favourable conditions’ is also incorporated into ILO Conventions, and appears in various forms in national legislatures, and State practices, it is a recognised principle of international customary law and its worth discussing whether it may be justiciable under the CEDAW Optional Protocol. \(^{48}\) CEDAW, articles 2 (e and f), 5
\(^{43}\) CEDAW, article 2 (e)
for private acts if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent violations of rights or to investigate and punish acts of violence, and for providing compensation.

Domestically, State parties and private employers generally have a full legal defense if they can demonstrate they have taken all practicable steps to prevent sexual harassment by active workplace policies and awareness strategies.\textsuperscript{44}

Cambodian Criminal\textsuperscript{45} and Labor Code prohibit sexual harassment but do not define it. Nor does it define sexual harassment at the workplace, outline complaints procedures, or create channels for workers to secure a safe working environment.\textsuperscript{46} However, the person who commits sexual harassment over another person shall be punishable from six days to three months and fines from one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Riels.

\textit{Social Protection}

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) was adopted as required by “The Law on Social Security Schemes for Persons” and established in 2007. It provides employment injury protection to workers but has three arms - medical insurance, occupational risk insurance and pension fund. All companies employing more than seven employees must pay to the NSSF monthly and includes all workers defined by the provisions of labour law including seasonal workers. However, only a small number of the population manage to benefit from this “fragmented and often inadequate social protection coverage”\textsuperscript{47}. None of the workers we interviewed was aware of this policy or if their employers were contributing to the NSSF.

In 2003, the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection consists of an ASEAN SocioCultural Community pillar which aims at creating a community that is people-centred and socially responsible. It requires social protection of all, especially vulnerable groups including the poor, children, older people, out of school youth and migrant workers.

The ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) aims at setting basic social security principles in all nine core areas of social security. The convention leaves the means of achievement of objectives to the member states.

ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) provides guidelines for states to establish national floors for social protection and aims to include workers in the informal sectors. It requires a minimum of basic income security for children, older persons and also access to health.

\textsuperscript{44} Generally a defense to an alleged breach of sexual discrimination legislation by employers
\textsuperscript{45} Cambodian Criminal Code, article 250
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Turning the Lens Around—A Study of The Cardcaptor's Best Friend: Tomoyo Daidouji

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Abstract:
The paper proposes to analyse the character of Tomoyo Daidouji, from the Shoujo Anime Cardcaptor Sakura. Tomoyo is theorised to be in love with her best friend Sakura, the protagonist of the show. Shoujo Anime, as a genre within Japanese Anime as a whole, is usually aimed at young female audiences. Along with an attractive main plot, this genre of anime establishes itself with an added focus on the personal and romantic relationships of the characters, without conforming to the heteronormative regime often established in popular contemporary western literature. An analysis of Tomoyo's unique personality, its place in the feminist movement, and her relationship with Sakura is the primary focus of the paper, along with positing the possible impact her distinctive disposition may have on the viewers and their image of conventional gender roles with respect to the world portrayed on the show. Delving further into Tomoyo's impact upon Sakura herself, her relationships and her success in the role she was needed to play in her fictional world, the research further delves into lithsexuality (largely categorised within the umbrella of asexuality) as a possible sexual orientation Tomoyo represents. Tomoyo's role in Sakura's life is analysed as it influences not only her own relationships with Sakura, and various other characters on the show, but also Sakura's self-reflection and understanding of her relationships with people around herself and Tomoyo.

Keywords: Gender roles, Japanese Anime, lithsexuality, feminism

Turning the Lens Around—A Study of the Cardcaptor's Best Friend: Tomoyo Daidouji

Japanese animated shows, commonly known as 'Anime', gained international popularity for the range and diversity of genres and themes explored in a vast majority of their programmes. Popular contemporary Western literature tends to conform to an established norm in its varied depictions of age, race, class, gender, religion, sexuality and several other demographics. Anime culture circumvents this heteronormative regime and embraces non-binary identities in equal measure as the cultural norm of the West.

One among the most popular genres within Anime, Shoujo, is usually aimed at young female audiences aged in the range of 8–14. Its counterpart: Shounen, is aimed at young male audiences of the same age. While the general themes within the genres remain the same, the difference lies in the emphasis laid primarily on action in Shounen, and on the development
of relationships in *Shoujo*, though neither is independent of the themes that are the focus of the other; they merely occupy a position that is less central to the attention of the viewers. *Shoujo* Anime gains its popularity among its target audience by creating fantastic universes that call to the viewers’ desire for adventure, along with depicting matters they are likely to be facing in their everyday life, as they discover various aspects of life and experience desire, while developing strong, diverse bonds with people around them.

“*Cardcaptor Sakura* and *Cowboy Bebop* has made the anime fandom a place where minorities have found solace and positive media representation. In this sense, anime can be seen as a site of resistance for certain Western values that are commonly imbued in children’s cartoons. The comparative practices of how each culture deals with representations of alternative sexualities and gender expression reveal how joining an international fandom has the potential to explicitly impact and develop one’s sense of identity.”

**Susan Noh (Subversion and Reification of Cultural Identity in Global Fandoms, p.6, 2016)**

Audiences unfamiliar with Anime and Otaku Culture, find a peculiar appeal in *Shoujo* Anime such as *Cardcaptor Sakura*, in its exploration of a universe that implicitly represents alternative sexualities to the established norm, and supports them as though they were no different from the predictable heteronormative regime. Moreover, viewing the pre-pubescent protagonist Sakura through that lens provides an insight into the life of a girl blissfully unaware of the kind of society that exists in our universe, and lives a life independent of taboos involving gender and sexuality. This allows all viewers, regardless of gender identity, to fantasise about a universe that accepts what our society views as deviations, as the norm, while accepting the heteronormative as equal to any other alignment.

Tomoyo Daidouji is introduced as Sakura Kinomoto’s best friend, and is, in many ways, far more perceptive and aware of the world around her than the protagonist. It is unknown to the viewers where her father is, and her mother is a successful president of large toy manufacturing firm. An only child hailing from an affluent background, Tomoyo is grounded and assiduous, constantly making use of the vast resources at her disposal to pursue her passions and aid her friends in any way that she can.

Housing an aspiration to make her own films, Tomoyo is rarely seen without her video-camera on her person, trained on her surroundings and experiences. She finds a singular delight in filming Sakura, who she seems to view as her muse. In the pilot episode of the Anime, when Sakura introduces the viewers to her best friend, Tomoyo informs Sakura that she has acquired a new camera and is thrilled at the prospect of filming Sakura again. Sakura, who seems embarrassed by the attention, asks Tomoyo if she would rather film something more interesting, to which Tomoyo promptly responds that, “There isn’t anything more interesting, or cuter, than you, Sakura-chan (*Sakura and the Mysterious Magic Book*, 1988).”

(Note: The author of the paper is not fluent in the Japanese language. All interpretation of the anime and subtext is based on the English subtitles.)

On discovering Sakura's position as a Cardcaptor, Tomoyo is extremely supportive, and makes known her firm belief that Sakura was meant for greatness, and will now receive an opportunity
to live up to her potential. Moreover, Tomoyo now has additional reason to film Sakura and document her adventures, using her best-friend's journey as a learning process that might ultimately prove instrumental towards shaping her future career.

Tomoyo's sincere affection towards Sakura, coupled with her easy declarations of affection, cause the author to theorise that Tomoyo may be in love with Sakura.

"Being able to spend time with someone I care about, having her wear cute clothing, and being able to record her on video. That is the epitome of bliss."

(Sakura and the Nameless Book, 1998)

"...there are lots of people that like Sakura-chan very much. Because Sakura-chan is just so ultra-wonderful and very cute!"

(Sakura, Tomoyo, and the Ball Trap, 1999)

The most unusual things seem to make Tomoyo happy. Once, she sprained her ankle before a marathon, and was delighted to have an opportunity to film Sakura from the sidelines (Sakura and the Sports Day of Flowers, 1998). On repeated instances, Tomoyo also seems to emphasise her lack of desire to have her feelings reciprocated.

Tomoyo: "If there is something that the person I like can be happy about, more so than liking me in return, I want that person to stay happy the way it was meant to be."

Sakura: "That means you don't care if the person you like likes you back?"
Tomoyo: "Of course, I would be happy if that person likes me back. But, for me the person I like so much staying happy gives me the biggest happiness."

(Sakura, Shaoran, and the Invisible Thread, 1999)

Tomoyo: "You must like Sakura-chan very much, Li-kun. [. ] Sakura-chan is rather clueless about such things, so she won't know unless you tell her. [. ] There are feelings best left in the heart. But, are your feelings fine with that, Li-kin? No feeling will come across to others if you don't put them into words."

(Sakura, Tomoyo, and the Ball Trap, 1999)

Tomoyo is aware that Sakura does not notice when someone is in love with her unless she is explicitly told, and implies that her own feelings are best kept hidden. Under these circumstances, it is possible to imagine Tomoyo as a "lithromantic", that is, "a person who experiences romantic love but does not want their feelings to be reciprocated. Lithromantic
people may or may not be ok [sic] with romantic relationships. Some accept reciprocated platonic love, or even romantic love, but does [sic] not find it necessary in a relationship."

(http://wiki.asexuality.org/Lithromantic)

Tomoyo often films Sakura covertly, declaring that it is when she is unaware that she looks "ultra-cute". In Sakura's Heart-Racing First Date (1998), Tomoyo's delight in capturing Sakura's date with her crush, and her eager plans with Meilin to bring Shaoran back to Japan in Cardcaptor Sakura and the Sealed Card (2000), so that Sakura can confess her feelings for him, go to prove that Tomoyo does not desire a romantic relationship from Sakura. But she wants Sakura to be with someone she can love romantically, because she knows how important that is to Sakura, even though it is not a priority for her.

Tomoyo keeps the footage that didn't make it to the final film, including Sakura's embarrassing moments, signifying that she does not have an idealised image of Sakura, but loves her as she is, wanting Sakura to accept herself the same way. Categorising Tomoyo as a lithsexual is validated because Tomoyo is aware that Sakura feels attraction towards women as well, yet is aware that Sakura simply does not love Tomoyo the way Tomoyo loves her, and is at peace with it. Even when Sakura openly admires Tomoyo's various talents, such as her filming, cooking and singing; or impulsively holds her hand; Tomoyo does not read into it, and accepts the compliment or show of platonic affection as Sakura intends it. Hudson-Weems defines such a bond:

This particular kind of sisterhood refers specifically to an asexual relationship between women who confide in each other and willingly share their true feelings, their fears, their hopes, and their dreams. Enjoying, understanding, and supporting each other, women friends of this sort are invaluable to each other.

Clenora Hudson-Weems (African Womanism & Race & Gender in the Presidential Candidacy of Barack Obama. p. 65, 2008)

In Sakura, Tomoyo and a Mansion (1998), Tomoyo's most precious possession is revealed to be the eraser Sakura gave her at their first meeting, proving her value for emotions and memories over material pleasures. This carries forward into Tomoyo's desire to archive all her memories with her best friend.
"If we articulate the pleasure of viewing, we may be able to understand power relations in contemporary visual culture more adequately. In addition, taking pleasure as the center point has an advantage; it will never have an exhausted point because the pleasurable experiences can never be fully defined and articulated. Not only does pleasure multiply, distort, and overflow the meanings, definitions, values, and classifications, but also everyone has a potential to invent his or her own pleasure.

Pleasure is always creative and productive, though it may not be critical. It has no means to an end and it may de-stabilize the regulatory power and the normalized discourses through practice."

Lein Fan Shen (Anime Pleasures As A Playground of Sexuality, Power and Resistance, p.7-8, 2002)

Filming Sakura incessantly is not taxing for Tomoyo, for she derives true pleasure from the act. She feels no need to justify her desire to be near Sakura, and finds pleasure in the smallest acts, such as doing Sakura's makeup, or combing her hair. Though her happiness is greatly derived from Sakura, it may be argued that Tomoyo's ability to find pleasure in the simplest of things symbolises her self-sufficiency.

Her relationship with Sakura is healthy and co-dependent. Sakura relies on Tomoyo's mental stability (staying solidly by her side when she is afraid of ghosts and the dark etc.) and Tomoyo depends on Sakura for physical protection trusting that she will be protected even in the most dangerous of situations.

While Sakura remains in awe of Tomoyo's wealth, Tomoyo never lets Sakura feel smaller, and reinforces her unconditional support for everything Sakura attempts. Tomoyo is passionate about making costumes, Sakura once again finding herself in the position of her muse. While Sakura does not seem to suffer from any harmful insecurities, she does lack the confidence in herself as an interesting enough subject for Tomoyo's films, or as the appropriate model for the beautiful costumes her best-friend designs. Tomoyo seems to make it her personal mission to instil in Sakura the confidence to carry the elaborate costumes that have been designed for her, as she attempts to capture all the Clow Cards. The first time Tomoyo makes Sakura wear one of her handmade costumes before she sets off to capture a Clow Card, Sakura is very vocal about her immense embarrassment regarding wearing such an intricate costume for what she sees to be no special occasion. However, as time goes by, Sakura becomes far less averse to the idea of dressing up in the costumes, and finds herself in a position where she acknowledges how much the costumes help her feel confident on her quests, and thanks Tomoyo for her support:
Sakura: "Thank you, Tomoyo-chan. You save me in all sorts of ways. I really do thank you. If you’re ever in trouble, or if something sad happens to you, you tell me. If it’s something I can do, I’ll do anything."

Tomoyo: "I won’t have anything sad as long as you keep smiling, Sakura-chan. My happiness if for you to stay happy, Sakura-chan."

*(Sakura, Shaoran, and the Tsukimine Shrine, 2000)*

Tomoyo is fiercely protective of the people she cares about, a group that extends to incorporate several, including Shaoran, another Cardcaptor who is in love with Sakura.

Tomoyo (extending a costume towards Sakura): "Please wear this."

Sakura: "Tomoyo-chan."

Tomoyo: "I have saved all the costumes that Sakura has worn in the past. She always returned with a smile, no matter what happened. Together with that costume that I made. So I’m sure she will come back safe and sound, this time too."

Sakura: "Tomoyo-chan, I’ll do my best with the clothes you made me, I promise!"

Tomoyo (handing another costume to Shaoran): "And this is for you, Li-kun. It’s not nice to be the only one not to come back."

*(Cardcaptor Sakura and the Sealed Card, 2000)*

In many ways, Tomoyo forms a pillar of silent support for the other characters. She encourages Shaoran when he fears his love for Sakura is unrequited, consoles Meilin when Shaoran breaks up with her, and provides solace to Kereberos when he is upset about his lack of power. Her emotional stability helps Sakura keep her cool and work with a stable head as well. She never lets Sakura dwell on the negative, reminding her of the good she had done when she is in danger of wallowing over the rare failed mission.

Tomoyo is completely secure in her friendship with Sakura, and in herself. She feels no jealousy for her lack of magical or martial arts abilities, and is aware of her strengths and limitations. Even as the cameraperson, Tomoyo is not one to shy away from danger, and often throws herself in the thick of things, either to capture footage, or to protect her friends.
Sakura: There are some dangerous things that happen when you’re with me.
Tomoyo: If I can be at your side, a little danger means nothing. Besides if I’m with you Sakura-chan, I’m sure everything will be alright.

*(Sakura, Tomoyo, and the Ball Trap, 1999)*

In *Sakura, Shaoran, and the Invisible Thread* (1999), she gives no thought before throwing herself against Shaoran, risking herself to protect Sakura. She takes pride in her skills of cooking and singing, embraces and loves her femininity, and shows a strong desire for financial independence with solid determination to work towards it. Her quiet demeanour and tendency to stay out of the spotlight is anything but a show of weakness.

The paper concludes by submitting the hypothesis that Tomoyo Daidouji is a unique representation of feminist theories of stability, love, sexuality, loyalty, perseverance, supportiveness and acceptance.

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Understanding Work-Life Balance
Rupa Korde, Ashini Patel

Abstract
Centuries ago the Aristotelian concept of Nicomachean Ethics established an individual’s happiness as the ultimate goal of human existence. The same idea has trickled down over the years, cementing the idea of a ‘happy worker’ in the modern world as “someone satisfied with one’s job” (Bauer, 2012). Life satisfaction thus becomes a vital conduit through which subjective well-being of individuals can be measured in an unbiased manner. In order to do so, critical aspects of modern human life need to be studied not in isolation but in correlation to one another so that the pieces may be put together so as to give a coherent picture. Given the increasing intrusion of the professional world into the personal sphere of an individual striking a balance between the two becomes an important determinant in maximising life satisfaction. This aspect becomes all the more apparent and essential in the case of women, especially with respect to those in the workforce, who are expected to juggle a major part of the domestic burden of the household alongside professional commitments.
Against this backdrop the Indian scenario presents an interesting case study for two main reasons: firstly, the self-proclaimed target of “500 million skilled personnel by 2022” and the advent of the demographic dividend can provide India with the capability to satisfy a large part of the global labour demand, and secondly because of the large shift that of the workforce from the unorganised to the organised sector over the past decade. With respect to a report by the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA, 2012) which states that the increasing role of women in the workforce in developing countries is as a matter of fact a coping mechanism in response to global economic shocks, the increasing number of female workers in the labour force in India – a developing nation - becomes all the more potent and thereby essential to study.
The paper thus reviews the extent to which the concept of work-life balance is applicable in the context of women workforce in India.

1.0 Introduction
Up until now one of the core assumptions of economics has been that every consumer makes a rational choice in order to maximise his or her welfare from a given basket of goods. It is with this line of thought as the foundational basis that the field of welfare economics sought to empirically study people’s subjective well-being, thereby simulating new avenues of research in what has been often referred to as the “dismal science”. More recently, the question has become as simplistic as “what makes people happy in life?” – a question that has shaken up the very foundations of economic theory by making happiness, an otherwise subjective, intangible emotion, a quantifiable as well as measurable entity that is strongly pursuable as an empirical endeavour within the realm of this social science (Alois Stutzer, 2012). The dialogue along these lines has gained momentum in the past few decades as governments, authorities and institutions have come to realize that in the modern lifestyle, individuals have lesser and lesser time for themselves – leisure as it is often referred to in economics – and a pressurizing, all-invading work culture is imminent (Doris Ruth Eikhof). Work-life balance as it is referred to, has been defined as “the act of maintaining balance between work and lifestyle of an individual”. The term is however
not of very recent coinage and came to be used for the first time in the 1970s (Sucheta Agarwal, 2015), that critical and redefining moment in history when women first entered the workforce in the UK (Alois Stutzer, 2012). Seeking to illustrate the importance of striking a balance between an individual’s life and work, this term although applicable equally to both to men and women was more contextualised and aimed at exploring the manner in which a woman can “be a caretaker as well as a bread-winner for the family” (Sucheta Agarwal, 2015).

The first and foremost problem though in this context arises from the manner in which the paradigms of work and life are considered by academicians and economists: while some treat them as separate entities which are at the end of the day balanceable, others view the relationship between the two as intertwined and more often than not amalgamated up to the extent that they do not want to distinguish or disentangle them (Doris Ruth Eikhof). And yet this is not the end of the debate that has since then ensued on the topic of work and life. The rallying around lesser work hours is not just a by-product of the contemporary lifestyle, but in fact has been in vogue ever since the concept of the “working class” came in. In France for instance, the phrase “work less, live better” has been doing the rounds since quite some time. While work has been often looked at in a negative connotation where longer working hours adversely impact well-being and might not even yield the desired outcomes, life can be equated to caring responsibilities, particularly childcare (Doris Ruth Eikhof). Thus the very nature of this particular subject matter seeks to ensure that women are the primary targets or are at the core of, to say the least, with respect to all the policies and provisions pertaining to work-life balance (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

While the presence of such policy interventions sets forth a rosy picture for women in the workforce, the state of affairs on the ground level, especially in India, need to be understood in the context of two aspects: firstly, with reference to the nature and current status of the women labour force in the nation and secondly, against the backdrop of how the concept of work-life balance can be applied to this workforce, which is also largely unorganised in nature. It is interesting to note that as compared to China where 68.9% of the women are involved in the workforce, in the case of India only 34.2% of the women are part of the labour force. Furthermore, according to recent reports, the overall trend of women labour force participation is negative and thereby on a decline (Labour Bureau of India, 2013-14). Surveys carried out during the 68th Round of NSS show that the female labour force participation for women fell from 34.1% in 1999-2000 to 27.2% in 2011-12 (EY and FICCI). In addition to this, a majority of the women workforce is highly unskilled and faces an ardent dearth of formal education, wherein in 2010 around 65% of the prime-aged women in rural areas and 30% in urban areas lacked access to basic education (Desai, 2010). Given this backdrop, seeking to analyse the extent to which work-life balance can result in increased job satisfaction of women in India, is an arduous task at hand.
2.0 Literature Review

In their paper *Recent Developments in the Economics of Happiness: A Selective Overview* Frey and Stutzer note two important aspects with respect to the current work in economics as well as in academia pertaining to work-life balance: first, that the literature is dispersed and does not provide much empirical insight into the subject matter despite the fact that the “economics of happiness” has been largely conceived as a measurable endeavour and secondly, that the number of published articles in any given year that “mention happiness, life-satisfaction or subjective well-being” have increased from 3 in 1986-90 to 146 in 2011. The figure below gives a glimpse into the trend that has ensued over the years with respect to the number of publications, and depicts a clear-cut take-off after 2000 as well (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

![Number of Published Articles on the economics of happiness referenced in EconLit between 1986 and 2011](image)

*Fig. 1: Number of Published Articles on the economics of happiness referenced in EconLit between 1986 and 2011*

(Source: *Recent Developments in the Economics of Happiness: A Selective Overview*) (Alois Stutzer, 2012)

However the nature of these reports and journal articles is primarily a result of the general dissatisfaction with much of the current debate regarding work-life balance. Further research done by Eikhof on other individual as well as collective sources over the years goes towards showing that only some workers view work and life as separate entities whereas others they remain largely intertwined and amalgamated. The paper also mentions several other mediums through which a dialogue regarding work-family balance has been put forth: in Italy, the concerns regarding an all-pervasive working culture have been put forth in Basso’s *Modern Times, Ancient Hours*; along similar lines, *The Overworked American* (1991) by Schor, USA and *Willing Slaves* (2004) by Bunting, UK are instances of the same (Doris Ruth Eikhof).

Given the debate regarding the empirical nature of work-life balance and the determinants that can be ultimately used to measure it, the mention of income, employment, social capital and health as important indicators of the direction of work-life balance, is a critical input in the larger scheme of things. In addition to this, the discussion on the Life Satisfaction Approach is also important given that it is one of the most recently vital developments in the field of welfare...
Thus a critical analysis of this as well as the other determinants of the same aids in providing a deep insight into the subject matter (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

While the need for striking a balance between work and life is a widely accepted fact both on part of the employees and employers, in the particular context of women labour force across the nation, the realization subsumes even greater importance. When women first entered the workforce in the 1970s, concepts such as “shared bread-winning” and others started to flow in. however, the title of being a bread-winner had very distinct implications for a woman when compared to those that were observed for men at large. The most important one of them was that women were not exempted from their household duties even if they were part of the workforce that took up a major part of their time. Social role theories were applied to such situations thereby allowing the expansion of literature in this particular avenue (Sucheta Agarwal, 2015).

3.0 How are happiness and work-life balance measured?

The concept of work-life balance primarily seeks to address either the ease or the difficulty with which individuals manage to balance the demands that arise owing to their family as well as work environments (European Social Service Education Net, 2013). Given that that both these parameters cannot be particularly measured quantitatively and that this particular discipline has followed an empirical trajectory as it has developed over the years, it mandates the measurement of the well-being of the subject, which in this case is the individual. Therefore, over the years researchers have resorted to methods and apparatus from disciplines such as psychology, although they were repeatedly rejected chiefly on the basis of being inadequate in providing economic insights and gauging the individual through a particular lens. The advent of new measures and statistical tools to analyse the survey data thus comes as no surprise (Alois Stutzer, 2012). As researchers have come to articulate it over the years, the central concept with the aid of which work-life balance can be determined, if not exactly measured, is through the conduit of perception – whether the individuals perceive the situation that they are in as stressful or manageable. Given the nature of the methodology itself, item wording differs from survey to survey as a result of which even the measurement schemes vary (European Social Service Education Net, 2013).

For instance, a survey conducted by the European Social Services [ESS] in 2004 focused on five particular parameters for their research on the subject matter with respect to women in UK, some of which are listed as follows:

- The manner in which family interferes with work [respondent’s answers to such questions read “My responsibilities towards my family and other important persons in my life prevented me from doing my work adequately”]
- The manner in which work interferes with other spheres of life [for instance, one of the questions pertaining to this section read “How often do you find that your job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner or your family?”]
- Experience with respect to the balancing of work and family [an example of this would include the effect of say flexible work arrangements on work-life balance or even family time] (European Social Service Education Net, 2013).
However as some researchers have established, at the end of the day the measurement of work-life balance is essentially nothing but the measurement of happiness. In their paper, Frey and Stutzer define happiness/subjective well-being as “various cognitive life evaluations and emotional reports”. For them, while evaluative aspects of well-being are measured through survey questions (eg. those on life satisfaction), emotional aspects are captured mainly on moment-to-moment affect. Formally though, two main approaches have been adopted for the same: the first one being the Experience Sampling Method, which allows for info on individuals’ actual experiences in real time in their natural environment; second, is the Day Reconstruction Method [DRM] – a more recent methodology that stands at the junction of psychology and economics – wherein people are asked to reflect how they felt during all the life episodes they went through on the previous day (Alois Stutzer, 2012). Unlike the life satisfaction approach which dwells on subjective interpretations that are more driven by retrospection than any other factor, the DRM approach attempts to get descriptions of the emotional state and establishes itself as “a cardinal measure of well-being”. However the problem with the determination of this particular variable is that it is only in rare situations that experimental setups can give insights into the overall status of an individual’s well-being (Alois Stutzer, 2012). Despite these hindrances, economists have managed to reach a stage wherein they can explore the positive and negative aspects of work-life balance in achieving life satisfaction. They do so by taking into consideration certain obvious variables such as income, employment, social capital, health and additional factors (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

- **Income**

The most prominent factor that comes to light when inquiring into the intricacies of this field, income has often been correlated to happiness under the umbrella of conventional economic theory. Therefore, to doubt that income and happiness are uncorrelated is questioning the very foundations of traditional economics, an approach described by the Easterlin Paradox. Named after the economist Easterlin, who proved that higher level of the country’s per capita GDP does not particularly correlate itself with greater self-reported levels of happiness, the paradoxical element against this proof is provided by conventional arguments in economics who also questions the employment of GDP as an indicator of people’s welfare. For us, the lesson to accept is that there is more than absolute income. The level of income captures more than a relative position either within a society or between societies. This aspect has been fruitfully explored in the economics of happiness (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

- **Employment**

There is a long tradition of research on the conditions at the workplace that contributes to a satisfying job: people are either directly asked about the importance of various job attributes, or the determinants of reported job satisfaction are explored in multiple regression analyses. This research is meaningfully complemented by recent work on general well-being or life satisfaction in economics; In early contributions reprinted in Easterlin (2002), as well as in many more recent empirical analyses, being unemployed is related to systematically lower subjective well-being than being employed; also based on certain studies, High unemployment rates also have negative effects on people who are not personally affected by unemployment (Alois Stutzer, 2012).
• **Social Capital**

Alternative sources of well-being are also imperative to study before commenting upon work-life balance. Given the dependence of happiness on social relationships – both in terms of quantity and quality in line with the social relations that people have with, the benefits of this particular factor cannot be confined to certain pre-set outcomes. However the extent to which the development of happiness over time has to be understood as an interaction between economic factors and aspects of social capital is an open issue so far (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

• **Health**

This has been the topic of discussion in social sciences way before it cemented itself as a dialogue in the arena of economics. While negative correlations have been documented between ill health and subjective well-being, it is not an established fact yet that good health also is a strong indicator of the well-being of an individual (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

However thus far the main indicator via which health has been measured is life expectancy. It poses a problem with respect to the purpose for which it being utilised, given the fact that it cannot be correlated with average life expectancy. In addition to this, research in this area is also mandated given that both health and average life expectancy feature as prominent indicators of subjective well-being and are indispensable when it comes to formulation of provisions and policies regarding the same (EY and FICCI).

• **Additional Factors**

Apart from these there are also other factors which act as important determinants of an individual’s well-being and posit an interest to economists. Inflation, income inequality and even socio-demographic characteristics such as level of education come under this category. Even political disturbance can reduce the level of life satisfaction, as has been emphasized over and over again by political economists who believe that the role of basic political institutions and setups affects the lives of citizens directly and in an impactful manner. In addition to this, environmental economists are of the view that environmental factors should not be exempted from this entire discussion. To them, factors such as the level of air pollution in a particular region can also directly impact well-being and thereby must be taken into consideration (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

4.0 **Concluding Remarks and Implications for the Future**

The economics of happiness has, over the years, developed as a strong empirical entity which seeks to measure individual well-being directly. Major contributions of this particular avenue within economic theory chiefly includes the induced and incited discussion on the topic of welfare in economics which has in addition to the occurrence of newer dialogues in the field, also brought to the forefront new measures of calculating subjective well-being (Alois Stutzer, 2012). The call of the hour has thus become not just a restructuring and re-designing of the job market, but doing so in accordance with the needs of the employees. Considering the role of work-family balance in enhancing the level of job satisfaction, the research and studies conducted on this subject should serve as a strong promulgator for organisations and institutions to develop as well as sustain what has been referred to as a “family-friendly culture” (Baral & Bhargava, 2010).
Having overlooked some of the issues that plague the otherwise critically important topic of work-life balance, it is concluded that the main aspect which is needed is a nuanced appreciation of the complex relationship that exists between work and life. Some of the recommendations that have put forth regarding the same are mentioned hence. Firstly, the everlasting debate in this field can only be brought to a standstill if the place of work and work experience are brought back into the picture. So far the primary manner in which work has been conceived is chiefly negative, which in turn is contradictory with the core tenets of human resource management, organisational behaviour and psychology. Secondly, even the understanding of the component of “life” in work-life balance needs to be redefined in a way which makes the term more holistic and encompassing in nature. Life is assumed to be the positive counterpart to the otherwise negative component of work, and while this may be true in some cases, the generalisation of this particular aspect in fact takes us a step away from being able to design appropriate policies for ensuring work-life balance. Finally, the empirical investigations that have been carried out in this regard should not be viewed with absolute certainty as their very approach to the subject may be skewed, as a result of which apt results may not be obtained for the same (Doris Ruth Eikhof).

The importance of the topic at hand is not only confined to the boundaries of the professional world, but also has crucial implications for public bodies and most importantly, the government. Spearheaded by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (2009), nowadays many think tanks have taken up research in happiness and its correlation with public policy. However there are two distinct schools of thought when it comes to “happiness policy”. The first school looks at the entire matter in the same way that Layard does, who proposes that “the cost-benefit structure of traditional welfare economics” be retained whilst the framing of such policies occurs. In contrast to this, Frey and Stutzer propose to use the findings from public choice theory in order to develop the foundations of public policy (Alois Stutzer, 2012).

References


**Appendix**

Fig. 1: Number of Published Articles on the economics of happiness referenced in EconLit between 1986 and 2011
How to promote and maintain the separation from an abusive partner: a dual perspective to inform future practice

D. Di Basilio

Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K.

Understanding which factors promote leaving an abusive partner and staying away from him is still a priority for the professionals dedicated to counteracting the phenomenon of domestic violence and abuse (DVA). However, the literature addressing the factors promoting the decision of leaving the perpetrator has often focused on objective indicators (e.g. the survivor’s economic resources) (Anderson & Saunders, 2003), failing to consider the psychological and emotional components leading to the decision of ending the violent bond. Therefore, the first part of the present study has involved twelve DVA survivors who had permanently ended the abusive relationship, who participated in semi-structured interviews aimed at gaining information about which psychological and emotional factors promoted their decision of leaving the perpetrator. An interesting difference emerged between the factors that facilitated the separation gradually and factors that acted as "triggers," leading to a sudden realisation that it was the right moment to break the violent relationship.

However, although leaving an abusive partner is a fundamental step towards a future without violence, evidence suggests that many women who leave abusive relationships tend to return to the perpetrator in the future (Griffing et al., 2002). Therefore, to efficiently counteract the detrimental effects of DVA on women, understanding what promotes the separation from the abuser might not be sufficient. It is equally relevant to consider the factors that keep the survivors away from the perpetrator once the separation has been accomplished. Little is known about the array of factors playing a role in women’s decision to return or stay away from the abuser (Abdulmohsen et al., 2012), particularly concerning subjective elements. For this reason, the survivors interviewed were also asked about the factors that, in their experience, made the separation from the perpetrator long-lasting, preventing their return. Novel factors not yet addressed by the literature have emerged, such as the perception that the survivors’ personal growth and newly achieved independence would be hindered by returning to the abuser.

To have a deeper understanding of how to best promote the separation from an abusive partner and prevent the return to him, in the third and last part of the study sixteen support workers have been interviewed about their opinions and experiences inherent to the process of separation from the perpetrator. There is a lack of literature considering the opinions of support workers, despite their pivotal role in supporting DVA victims. Interestingly, they confirmed some of the factors identified as relevant by the survivors, but also added factors that had not been mentioned. A comparison between the knowledge emerging from the two samples has been made, with the aim of obtaining a more accurate understanding of the processes concerning leaving and staying away from the perpetrator, that hopefully can inform future practice aimed at counteracting domestic abuse.
The Development of Women Professional Farmers in Shaanxi, China  
Evidence from Shaanxi, China

Mei Yang¹, Allan Rae, Martin Young², Huiyan Zhao³

Abstract: Women professional farmers, as a group of new agricultural operators⁴, represent the direction of China’s agricultural modernization. However, due to its small number and still at the initial stage, no research has been done yet. This study used Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach as its base, combined western scholars research, through interview and thematic method, studied the emerging women professional farmers’ common traits and challenges. The former finding updated Chinese rural women’s image in modern time, can have spill over effect on the development of ordinary rural women, and the later results give governments at various levels hints about how to support, empower and enlarge this group of people.

Key Words: women professional farmers, common treats, challenges, Shaanxi

1. Introduction

With the promulgation of the National Cooperative Law in 2007, accompany its rural land reform Chinese central government has been working hard over the past decade to cultivate a group of professional farmers for moderate scale farming and agricultural modernization (Ito, Bao, & Su, 2012). The number of farmer cooperatives in China has grown steadily since then, together with relevant professional farmers’ training classes are given nationwide. Among them, a handful of them specifically target at women professional farmers, organized by some local women federations can be occasionally found in news reports (He & Danping, 2016, July 8). Women professional farmers, as a group of new agricultural operators represent the direction of China’s agricultural modernization. Although currently women professional farmers are few, their existence can challenge traditional types of gender-based access to resource management, improve gender relations in community development, and advance participation. An analysis of the common traits of this group of women in China will not only set an example for ordinary rural women so as to have an impact on them, but also build an updated image of rural women within the fast development of China’s agricultural modernization.

The article is arranged in the following way. Section 2 is the theoretical base: Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach and relevant study on capabilities. Section 3 data and methods. 4. The results and discussion. 5. Conclusion.

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³ Huiyan Zhao is with College of Plant Protection, Northwest A&F University, Yangling, China, 712100 China (phone /Fax: 0086-2987092085 email: zhaohy@nwsuaf.edu.cn)
⁴ In its No.1 Central Document of 2012 and 2013, the Chinese government emphasized developing new types of agricultural operational bodies, which include a new type of professional farmer (Yang, 2013).
2. Theoretical base: Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach

Originally put forward by Amartya Sen and modified by scholars mainly in western developed countries, and Table 1 shows the work of capability researchers over the years (Robeyns, 2005).

Table 1. Comparison of Several Lists to do with the Capability Approach

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The list</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Gender inequality in Western societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measurement in Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of abstraction</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Mortality</td>
<td>1. Life</td>
<td>1. Life</td>
<td>1. Life and physical health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Political resources</td>
<td>8. Other species</td>
<td>8. Paid work and other projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Leisure and recreation</td>
<td>10. Control over one’s environment</td>
<td>10. Mobility</td>
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</table>

Source: (Robeyns, 2003)

Different from yet based on the previous research on selecting relevant capabilities (Nussbaum, 1995, 2000, 2003; Robeyns, 2003), the researcher of this study innovatively made three layers of capabilities for rural woman professional farmers (WPFs) in China (See Figure 1). The researcher uses their narratives of their background, and development of family farms as the base layer. Layer two is about rural woman’s agency and self-direction. Sen (1999) pointed that agency means the person’s ability to act on what they value and have reason to value, while self-direction refers the ability to shape one’s own destiny as a person and as part of various communities. Layer three, the highest one, has two parts: social networks (family relationships and friendships, participation in community activities, and group membership) and political empowerment.

Figure 1. Hierarchy for evaluating Chinese women professional farmers’ capabilities
3. Data and method

The data of women professional farmers in this study mainly came from Shaanxi, and was collected in January 2016. Shaanxi as a major agricultural province in China consisted of 10 sub-provincial cities and one Yangling High-tech Industry Demonstration Zone (see Figure 3). By the end of 2015, the resident population of Shaanxi province was 37.92 million. The urban population accounted for 53.92 percent and the rural population for 46.08 percent, and the sex ratio is 106.73 (taking women as 100) (Comprehensive introduction of Shaanxi Province).

One source is from Yangling, ‘the cradle of China’s agricultural science and technology development and a significant base for the demonstration of agricultural industries and the Silicon Valley of modern agriculture’ in China (2016), the women professional farmers’ there already have some scale with a certain amount of assets and maturity in the industry. Between 2012 and 2014, 212 rural women become agricultural technicians and professional farmers in Yangling. With skills and professional identification, women professional farmers offer technical services not only within Shaanxi province, but also in other provinces like Shandong, Gansu, and Yunnan (Li & Zhang, 2014, October 29). Yangling Women’s Federation provided a list of interviewees. By comparison, by 2017, the Shaanxi provincial government plans to have one hundred thousand people trained as professional farmers, and aims to have two hundred thousand by 2020 (Jiang, 2014, November 24). In reality, in April 2015, after awarding 84 professional farmers in the precious year, Shaanxi province awarded ‘Senior Professional Farmers’ certificates to 182 farmers, of which 22 were women, accounting for 12 percent of the total (Hao, 2015, April 19).

The second source was from a second term professional farmers’ training class carried out at Lueyang. Of the 100 trainees in the second term professional farmers’ training class carried out at Lueyang, ten were women. As it was a training class, trainees were at different developmental stages: some has developed well with a certain scale, while most of them were still at their initial stages. The data was collected from a group discussion during one night of the training session. The attendants were noticed to gather at the researcher’s hotel room. It was a volunteer action for the trainee to show up, thus the data was randomly collected.

Although seventeen women professional farmers and trainees were interviewed by the researcher, excluding those co-operated with their husbands, only six of the women were chosen...
and studied here. In other words, the focus was on the women who really run the cooperative or family farm.

Table 2. Profile of Women Professional Farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yangling</td>
<td>WPF1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Breeding</td>
<td>Ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WPF2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Kiwifruit</td>
<td>Mature &amp; prosperous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WPF3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Dry fruit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han-zhong</td>
<td>WPF4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Flower and wood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WPF5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Herb medicine</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WPF6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Mountainous vegetable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Results and discussion

Generally speaking, women professional farmers are always brave enough to move out of their comfort zone and try something different and challenging. Centred on the theme of agency and self-direction, five common traits (See Figure 2) of women professional farmers are found including rich business and/or migrant work experiences, having a strong learning spirit, diligence, courage to explore new things, and different degrees of mobility. The barriers all these women encounter are social norms, including the backward marital customs and unpaid household care providers. Lack of political awareness and involvement is also a major challenge for this group of women.

4.1. Common Traits: Agency and Self-direction

All women professional farmers are hard workers, independent, and actively choose a different life for themselves and are far better adjusted in society. They have become more self-assured, visible, and autonomous subjects. Through women professional farmers’ narratives, they demonstrate five common treats in terms of agency and self-direction.

Figure 2. Illustration of women professional farmers’ agency and self-direction
First, almost all of the women professional farmers have some migrant work experience, business experience or both. WPF1 was once a tailor with six apprentices; WPF3 first worked as migrant worker, later developed a motorcycle store; WPF4 firstly operated an iron mine with her husband, and before she start her flower and cash wood cooperative, she went to a relevant industry to practice for several years; WPF6, together with her ex-husband, once organized her country fellow to work on construction sites. WPF5 had the most multiple business experience by first ran a kindergarten while waiting for her husband’s military service, then, a beauty shop, which was shut down not because of bad management, but to take care of her sick father, and now the third time in her life. WPF6 once organized her county fellow to work on construction site in a foreign province. These experiences are good accumulation for their human capital and have widened their vision and improved their managerial capabilities, leadership, and organizing capability to make them stand out from ordinary rural women.

All the women professional farmers are hard working. WPF2 maintained that she worked 20 hours every day. Whenever customers order kiwifruit on the internet, even if it was at 10 pm, she would immediately ride her motorcycle and go to the kiwifruit storage unit to pack the fruit for the customer and then deliver it. WPF3 was on her way for a technical training while I called her for clarifying questions; WPF1 also illustrated her diligence through her description of her daily work:

Villagers always say I can compete against three men at work. Every day I get up at 4am and go to my milk station to milk the cow. After that, I drive my three-wheeled motorcycle to a clean-vegetable factory by my village to pick up the unwanted vegetable leaves for my pigs and the paper package waste they throw away as well. Then I drive to a waste collecting station not far away to sell those paper packages. By doing this, I can get an extra 1000 yuan income per month.

To me, staying idle is a waste; I love working.

Meanwhile, all the successful women professional farmers have shown different degrees of mobility to enlarge their living and working spaces. WPF2 has a motorcycle at her disposal, and WPF1 has a three-wheeled motorcycle to go wherever she wants. WPF3, WPF4, and WPF5 all have a car to assist them to operate their dried fruit, herb, and flower businesses, respectively. Although WPF6 does not have a motorcycle or a car, she still manages to go wherever she wants
by local limited public transport or asking acquaintances to give a ride to participate in various kinds of events such as professional farmers’ training.

In addition, this group of women professional farmers also illustrate a strong learning spirit together with courage to explore what they do not know. For instance, WPF1 was once a tailor, but she is not afraid of the unknown breeding field and starts a breeding cooperative. WPF3 was a businesswoman selling motorcycles, but now comes back her hometown to develop her family farm. WPF4 once run a ore mine, but later started her cash wood and flower cooperative, and

As WPF1 said:

*As long as I have an idea, I will do it. We once needed to build a cow shed around 3000 square meters for storing feed, and a flat for living. Although not knowing anything about building, I hired people who knew and learnt something about building while giving them a helping hand.*

WPF3 said:

*Whatever I do not know, I want to learn.*

Picking up the right industry is very important for the development of cooperative. WPF4 is a good case in point. Through Choose right industry, everything goes on smoothly. At each step in her life, she set a solid base for the next one. From her early business experience of assisting her husband operating an ore mine, she got managerial experience; she then went into the cash wood business by firstly working for others. Through managing some large projects, she accumulated relevant experience as well as built social networks. With her new skills, she came back and set up her cash wood and flower cooperative. Because of careful market investigation, her flower and cash wood businesses matched local development and met people’s need to beautify their lives. Her businesses do not have many competitors, so it grows quickly and smoothly. However to other women professional farmers, they are not that lucky.

4.2. Challenges: Lack of Political Awareness and its bad impact

Of all the women professional farmers and trainees interviewed, only WPF2 has had some political involvement working as a Women Representative in the village committee. Although the position mainly concerns women’s issue in the village and is not a key role in the village committee, at least she is involved in it. All the others show little interest in being part of the village committee. The reasons behind are historical and psychological constraints on women are formidable. Honig (1985) argued that the marital custom of patriilocality (the bread moves to bridegroom’s village) is a key reason hindering Chinese rural women’s enthusiasm in political equality. For one thing, when a young woman is at the natal village, she is less likely to be trained as village committee leader because she will leave her village at marriage. For another, if she acquired some power in her natal village, once she married and moved to her husband village, she, as a newcomer, would face distrust, meanwhile, had much less advantage to compete with men who had been born and bred in the village for political power. Meanwhile, Patricia, Hou, and Wang (1995) argued that women’s participation in the politics is curtailed and characterized by their reluctance to challenge the traditions that define their roles as nurturers, supporters, and organizers.
Although it is a global phenomenon that women are less involved in politics, Chinese rural women generally lack awareness of their rights, let alone participate politically (K.J. O’Brien & Han, 2009). Society does not provide equal opportunity for women to become involved in politics and is often prejudicial against women who engage in it. For the women professional farmers in Shaanxi in this study, they are the pioneer of ordinary of ordinary rural women and some of them illustrated outstanding capability in their operation of family farms. Yet, even this group of women, they are also generally lack of political awareness. The consequences of this are that they are easily exploited, marginalized, and excluded by mainstream society. What’s worse, there is not any sign to show they have any intention to improve their political involvement.

WPF1’s cooperative has been existing for 16 years, the longest of all those interviewed. As one of the pioneers of new agricultural operators, due to lack of political awareness thus government support, her cooperative development seems to be full of hardship, and she always has to fight against market fluctuations. Her hardship did not stop there. Impacted by the village land acquisition, she passively accepted the village committee’s manipulation of the cooperative land contract without arguing for her rights.

I initially contracted 30 mu of land for 15 years at the price of 500 yuan/mu for my cooperative. In 2014, when the contract was to expire, the village committee gave me two options: either they keep the contract fee as 500 yuan/mu, but later they will extract 10 percent of my relocation compensation fee for all of my cooperative property after they sell the land. Or, they simply increase my contract fee to 2000 yuan/mu now, and will not charge extra from my compensation fee. I later chose the former. Meanwhile, I reduced my contracted land size to 10 mu, which is only one third of my previous scale.

It is also easy to explain why there is a common reply among the women professional farmers that they did not get much support from local government. Meanwhile, local government support has a characteristic of icing on the cake. It is reflected that local government cares more about the farming scale and public image than the individual’s real developing desire and potential. For instance, as long as one has a certain farming scale and looks good, one is more likely to get official support, regardless whether the program or project works or not in the end. As there were cases that when things did not turn out as expected, the guy got government support just run away irresponsibly. So it is a common sense among the interviewed women professional farmers if you want to get support, you first need to reach some scale. The local women’s federation and Technical Association saw blossom flowers and voluntarily erected advertising board for WPF4. But as one of the trainees put it if she has already had some scale, what is the point of the government support?

WPF6 is divorced wants to make a living in her ex-husband’s rural community, which is against social norm behaviour. Fei (2006) expressed one of the characteristics of Chinese rural community as a fixed relationship of people and places through being born there and died there. He also summarized two ways for an individual to blend into a village: Firstly, setting root in the earth, one has land in the village, he/she is locally rooted; another one is through that is as long as marriage to get into local relatives’ circle. The blood and geopolitical unity is the original state of a rural community in China. With the traditional marital custom to move to the husband household to live, most of Chinese rural women do not have access to land ever since their
marriage. Thus, once a rural woman gets divorced, she becomes nobody to local villagers due to the loss of her marriage identity. Villagers interpret that she would remarry at any time, and move to her new husband’s place (village). So local people including her ex-mother-in-law does not believe in her still hold doubt towards her and are hesitated to join the cooperative for fear that she may run away with their money one day. For an outsider, it is hard to imagine how much pressure, hardship, and prejudice she experiences.

WPF5’s story also says a lot about women’s life which revolves around marriage and being a care-provider. In less than 20 years, WPF5 stopped twice and started businesses three times. In her early 20s, WPF5 married a soldier who had to serve the country in another bordering province. She started to run a kindergarten started with only two children, two years later there were usually 15 to 20 children attending in a small town. When her husband completed his army service, she closed her kindergarten and she and her daughter joined her husband and moved there. She started a beauty shop and did the service all by herself. Later, the business developed to a scale where she had six beauticians working for her. While her business in beauty was on track and developed well, her father got seriously sick. With no valid social security system, it was children’s most of the time, the daughters or daughters-in-law’s responsibility, to look after their parents when they were sick or paralyzed. WPF5 closed her beauty shop to take care of her father for several years until he died. In 2013, during the local woodland reform, WPF5 leased 400 mu of land on a hill. Following local industry characteristics, she chose to plant Chinese medicinal herbs. Hence, it was the third time WPF5 had started a business.

The optimistic side of the issue is that with the development of society, like the widespread migration of rural household family members, rural individuals start to gain greater connections with the outside world through TV, the usage of smart phones, even the internet, rural community becomes less rigid as before. All this can undoubtedly present some favourable environment for rural women like WPF6 to continue with what they believe in. However, old customs are deep-rooted and hard to get rid of, and are impossible to rely on an individual to beat.

5. Conclusion

Women professional farmers are a group of new agricultural operators in China. They not only set an updated image of Chinese rural women, but also represent the direction of China’s agriculture modernization. With hard working, strong learning spirit, rich human capital accumulated in business and migrant working experiences, courage to explore the unknown, and mobility at different levels, they all show strong signs of agency and self-direction. Women professional farmers’ social network is normally decided by the scale of their cooperatives. The larger their cooperative, the larger social network they have. The social networks most of them have are family relationships and friendships, there is little participation in community activities, and almost no group membership for them. This makes women professional farmers’ life relatively boring and working centred.

Women professional farmers’ economic life is easily interrupted by marriage, child rearing, and taking care of the elderly in the family passed done by marriage customs and gender divisions of labour, thus they are urgently in of need of specific support. With all the interviewees, no matter what her condition is, the unpaid work, such as taking care of the children, the sick, the disabled, or the elderly, is naturally the woman’s responsibility. This fossilized gender division of labour
makes it seem natural that women were born to do all the unpaid domestic work and provide care for the household. The deep-rooted social injustice and marital norms have strongly restricted women’s equal right in development.

Women professional farmers have very little political awareness. What’s worse, they do not even show any intention to improve their political involvement. There were cases that their right was hurt, but they did not have the intention to fight for it. And their lack of awareness to challenge the traditions still constraint their big progress to keep up with the economic development of the whole nation. It cannot be denied that all these changes will need of lots of government support and the whole society to form a supportive environment, work together and make the change possible.

6. References:

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Empowering Women through Creative Writing

L Hill
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In this presentation I will examine the ways in which creative writing can have a positive impact on health and well-being. Using my own practice-based research, working with Women’s Aid East and Midlothian, a charity which supports women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, I will explain how reading and creative writing allows women a chance to find their voice; a voice which may have been suppressed or silenced. Using examples, I will illustrate the ways in which creative writing can help to build women’s self-esteem and confidence to use that voice again.

For the past two years I have been working as a creative writing facilitator in a community project, working with survivors of domestic abuse. I established a ‘Storycafe’ with a group of women, creating a reading group with a difference and also facilitated a creative writing workshop. Creating a safe and friendly environment to explore reading and writing ultimately helped the group to produce a piece of creative writing, ‘A Dangerous Woman’, which was published by Edinburgh University’s The Dangerous Women Project and later shortlisted for The Write to End Violence Against Women Awards 2016. The group was invited to the awards ceremony which took place in the Scottish Parliament in December 2016.

My academic research, at the University of Stirling, focuses on the role of women in contemporary Scottish and Scandinavian crime fiction. The modern crime novel is said to offer a reflection of the problems of modern society and, according to the World Health Organisation one in three women have experienced violence (1), so it is of little surprise that abuse against women is a key theme in many of these books.

Early on in my research I realised I wanted to do some community engagement work, particularly because of the significant impact creative writing can have in a non-academic setting. I should add here that I have a long-held interest in working with women who have faced gender-based violence. As a former journalist it was an issue that I frequently wrote about. So working with women’s charity, particularly as women and girls are so disproportionately affected by discrimination, seemed a natural choice.

However in order to do this properly, I wanted to be prepared. My research is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and I am fortunate to have the support of the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH). So with two other students we made a bid for funding to hold a workshop on bibliotherapy methods and resources at Glasgow Women’s Library (GWL). ‘Read, Write and Grow’ was a one-day training event hosted by the GWL’s reader-in-

http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/03/17/497/womensaideastnmidlothian/

https://writetoendvaw.com/read-the-shortlisted-articles/
residence Magi Gibson. The training included practical group teaching and facilitating skills to participants keen to gain confidence to teach during their doctoral research.

I was keen to put this practice into use as soon as possible and have been fortunate that the SGSAH has supported me to work with Women’s Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML), as a writer in residence, for two years. I have also undertaken training with Scottish Women’s Aid, ‘Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Abuse’, which has been invaluable.

In November 2015, I established a ‘Storycafe’ for the charity with the hope of creating a reading and writing group with a difference. The aim was to create a safe and friendly environment to explore reading and writing in a bid to improve the women’s health and well-being. It was to be accessible and informal; and at the outset I emphasised that this was for the women, so they could, hopefully, discover the joy of words and also build their confidence and help them find their voice.

When we started the first session, I think it is fair to say everyone was a bit nervous, myself included. The women were anxious that I would be expecting them to produce pages and pages of writing which I reassured them was not the case. Each week I would choose a different theme; including food, journeys, colours and home. I began each session with a short reading, either a poem or an extract from a book. The text I chose was always something I hoped could engage the group in a conversation and discussion. This would be followed by a writing exercise.

Over the weeks I was amazed at the change in each woman. Some started reading books again and also began to write outside of the group. As the weeks progressed, each and every member would read their work aloud at our sessions together. This was a remarkable achievement for many who had been silenced for so long and whose self-esteem was at rock bottom.

On our final session together we looked at what it meant to be a ‘dangerous woman’. This was inspired by the Dangerous Women Project (2), being run by Edinburgh University, around the question: ‘What does it mean to be a dangerous woman?’ We talked about women who they admired and those who were not such great role models. However what was interesting was that the group didn’t dwell so much on women they didn’t like or admire; they focused on women who had been influential on them during their life and this tended to be relatives or family friends. Then I went round the group and asked each woman to fill in the blanks, a dangerous woman is….

Soon after the result was a collaborative poem - ‘A Dangerous Woman’. This was published by the Dangerous Women project in March 2016 and later shortlisted in The Write to End Violence Against Women awards 2016 (3). All of the women were invited to a ceremony at the Scottish Parliament which was an incredible achievement for them all.

Finally, here are just a few of the quotes from the group at Women’s Aid East and Midlothian about the benefits gained from these Storycafe sessions:

“I really enjoyed coming together with other women, really enjoyed sharing our stories together and it was amazing how many shared experiences we all had.”

“I was thinking it would all be posh and big words. Or confusing like poetry. I made my own writing, without even thinking I was doing anything. I’ve got it stuck to my fridge. When I’m down I look at and think - that is me.”

“I’d really like to do more groups like this, I was a bit worried about whether or not this would be my thing but it was really good fun. It was more emotional than I expected it to be but that was really positive.”

“I enjoyed it. I wasn’t able to do all the different exercises as some I related to more than others, however that didn’t matter. I was put at ease and just listening the other women share their work
was really good. Even the bits I didn’t do any writing I was still made to feel that I was able to contribute.”

“It gave me the inspiration to start writing again.”

These words perfectly sum up the significance of creative writing for health and well-being in this community setting. It empowered these women by giving them a chance to express themselves and allowed them to reclaim their voices. The benefits of this have been far wider than I could ever have hoped.

(2) http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/03/17/497/womensaideastnmidlothian/
(3) https://writetoendvaw.com/read-the-shortlisted-articles/

By Nellie, Fiona, Priscilla, Sharon, Polly, Elaine, Brenda, Penny and Marian

A Dangerous Woman

A dangerous woman is to men, a woman in power who wants to get even.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who is not afraid to say what’s on her mind.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who knows her rights and values herself.

A dangerous woman is a mother, for her children and a woman who loves.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who can influence others in a negative or positive way.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who, when she realises her man’s an abuser, takes back her life.

A dangerous woman is a woman, that encourages other women to stand up and win.

A dangerous woman is me,
when a man tries to bully me.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who now lifts up her head.

A dangerous woman is a woman, with a cause and a passion.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who manipulates and is spiteful.

A dangerous woman is to anyone, who ever harms her family.

A dangerous woman is a woman, with a voice and a sense of humour.

A dangerous woman is a woman, who won’t be stopped and won’t be quiet.

A dangerous woman is someone, who holds any power.

A dangerous woman is all of us, when we refuse to crumble.

We are women, independent women, the strongest you’ll ever come across.

We are women who have achieved, We are women who are phenomenal.

**CV**

Lorna Hill has been awarded an AHRC studentship (2014-2017) for her doctoral research at Stirling University where she is researching the role of women in contemporary Scottish and Scandinavian crime fiction with a particular focus on texts by female authors. She is committed to community engagement, and with the support of the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities, has been working as a writer in residence with Women’s Aid East and Midlothian.
Gender Pay Gap - Seeking Dialogue

Iti Tyagi

Senior Analyst, Speaker, Musician, Woman @ Pune, India

As we make a transition from ancient history to the present world, we can see there has been a constant battle. The battle, against inequality, which is engrossed too deep in our day to day life. Battle fighting miscellaneous forms of discrimination. The unjust and prejudicial treatment within society, on the basis of different grounds such as Race, Religion, Opinions, Gender or any other factor, which makes one human different from another, has been prevalent. One of the most debatable issue faced by all of us, the generation – the global population, is the Gender based pay discrimination. This war has been embedded so deep in our roots, that it now has its presence everywhere. The issue is for women, who despite being equally educated and well experienced, still lags behind her male counterpart, when it comes to getting equal respect for their talent and hard work.

What can be the reason, when both the genders have studied in the same college, (quoting the research conducted by WEF, advocating the fact that education gap is on parity and is now close to 10-year gap) still have unequal wages? When they are studying the same subjects, graduating in the same course and are also at the same experience level, still why one earns lesser than their fellow? This dominant concern of history has now become the obvious problem in our day to day life. With the advancement of technology and subsequent innovation, resulting in increased opportunities for women, it is now possible to expand wings in major domains. But, silently accept the fact that pay difference, in other words Gender pay bias, might be an obstacle to overcome too.

The World Economic Forum stated in 2016, that it could take approx. 170 years to put an end to the disparity existing in wages and employment opportunities for both men and women. The South Asian countries can mend the gap in 46 years, whereas the Western European Nations can achieve the same in 61 years, and Latin American Nations can achieve the parity in 72 years. There are nations with a smaller pay gaps, such as New Zealand, where data is convincing but still doesn’t add up to the solution. Women still earn average 5% lesser than that of men, as per the report published by Business Insider in 2015.

Researching on the equal effort, equal salary subject has also drawn attention towards numerous questions and probable answers for all of them. It was hard to digest this fact,
that even though we are in 21st century, we still face discrimination in workplace when it comes to behaviour towards recognizing the effort of women, accepting the fact that she can also accomplish the same level of expertise, and can also add valuable contribution. According to "The American Association of University Women", and "Labour Department data" it is a noticeable fact that, there is a difference of on average 82 cents to every dollar that male counterpart has been earning for the same level of work women is supposed to do. However, CNN Money states the fact for 80 cents to every dollar of male colleagues. This figure or gap was 79.6 in 2015 though. All of these comparisons have been evaluated on full time workers, for their year-round work.

The gap of 20 cents seems insignificant, but when we do maths it is not to be ignored. What this actually adds up to? It means women can lose up to $10,470 in median earning per year, as per the report published by NWLC in March. If we take a career long scene, this gap hampers the professional health and wealth being. As per the 2015 pay gap research, a 20-year old woman who is just starting her career graph, will eventually lose $418,800 in a period of over 40 years, in comparison to her male colleagues.

In order to overcome this loss, which she will incur financially, she would have to work for another 10- years if she really wants to be at an equal financial podium.

As per the report published by ILO, which examined the data of 178 nations, women represent 46% of the total worldwide population adding in the workforce compared to 72% men, but this percentage bifurcates to only 46.3% of workforce in service sector, 35.4% in agricultural and 18.3% in industrial sector (The facts and figure stated in ILO’s report of 2016).

It is inevitable to discuss the research by drawing data based on factual representation, this will provide the solid and concrete base for further discussion. Presenting below some of the graphical representation of Forbes, and Universum Global Research] results of Gender Gap and Pay expectations, available as public data as of January 2017.
Below is the graphical representation of data from countries currently holding lesser gender gaps.
The above charts provide results and we are not surprised at all. But what is worth the effort of studying the same is, we have Morocco, as only nation where results of the survey are a bit relieving. Women are expected to earn more than men. But, it does not advocate the fact that there is a similarity in their Economic well being. No, only 27% of Moroccan females are adding up in their labour force, in comparison to their 78% men population. The graph above also shows UAE, data where women and men are at parity when it comes to salary, but in the background, only 42% of the women participate in labour work force, when we compare to their 92% males. It is also not to be ignored that in both UAE and Morocco, if women are expected to have higher education, and is one of the major factor that adds up to the facors of parity in gender gap.

We cannot ignore the graph of United States, where there is a maximum gap in salary expectations. Women’s salary expectations are 91% of men’s salary expectations, and believe it or not data states, that the gender pay gap is 80%. We are talking of maximum pay gap in one of the most powerful nations in the world.

Look at the facts below for countries with widest gender gaps, once both the genders complete the same level of education, How much they are expected to earn now?
Above graph, states Bulgaria has the prominence when it comes to pay gap expectations. Although when compared based on participation in labour force, there are more women participating there, when we compare to Africa or Middle East. There is tie between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. The data from Saudi Arabia comes as no surprise and only 21% of women are looking out to work and participate in labour work force.

The graph below is now a comparison of Gender Gap Salary Expectations, after graduations and adding more nation into the representation, United States.

The results of United States again come as no surprise after the graph above stating the maximum salary expectations in the same compared to countries with narrow Gender gaps. Now, gap narrowed a bit when compared to nations with wider gaps, but still doesn't add more towards the solution.

![Gender Gap in Salary Expectations](image)

What is it that we are still discussing the problem, what has contributed to the cause? We have discussed and viewed the facts and now its time to understand the reason behind the mindset, source in the background which has resulted in the current stage.
If we study the history, it is not to be ignored that Women, have been categorized as fragile, having little power or strength to fight the battles of the world. Their anatomy is as such, that they are more suited to do household chores and support the family, whereas the men in the family is the one who has been an earning source. This conception was challenged during World War II, where women were participating at the front and demanded adjustments to equalize wages. It was a move to shift their image from being a weaker gender to a strengthened one. Also, even in the families when a girl is born, there is a general notion and trend that she will devote most of her time at home and doing activities which suits her more. She is expected to do, what he mother or grand mother has been doing for decades. If she is not falling into the same zone, she is trained forcibly to adjust to the life where she belongs, at home, or mostly at home. No doubt exceptions are always there, otherwise, we would not have been accountable to discuss so much today. There were some who broke the common notion and gave us a way for a change.

Was it also the reason, that there were no role-models to look forward to at that time? Or lesser known women who were flying high and were shattering the glass? No doubt, anyone in the forefront who, is leading by an example and has been receiving the accolades for the same, will definitely advocate the move of others. Less women in power could have been a reason for slow changes, weak policies and lesser votes for the female issues. So, when there was a population in the domain of Politics, Technology, Education and many more, there was no data to be compared to. As governing factors for them were less, whom to compare, what to check in history when this is happening for the first time?

We also, cannot ignore the fact, that being raised with a notion of being weak or inferior to their male counterpart, has added to the inability of arguing less when demanding rightful thing for self. The fear of being judged and sidelined as a problem, was enough to never actually come to a point of change. There were lesser cases of debates and thus pellucid growth.

As stated above, lack of examples and history, it was not known that how much this job or task is going to pay for them. In other words, this led to wage discrepancies and also working under the notion that there should be no discussion over wages, although they might seem unfair at a point. In case you are battling equal right, it was a big deal to take your employer to court and fight for it. Who will be at your side? You are weak, atleast this is what society pictures you as, so how will you win with no one at your shoulder?

Since you are earning less, or your input in the family income is bleak, you tend to be less impactful at home. The task of managing home and taking care of family, are not task at all? It comes naturally to you. This is what is expected from you. You are earning less and thus most of the time of yours should be at home. You get less, so be at home more.
Last but not the least, those who were at power, Men, were also not forcing the market to cut this discrimination among the workforce. Discrimination was always there, but you cannot find it like a hot pan at once. Someone has to dedicate himself to the cause and filter out the scenarios, cases where there is a bias. With typical role stereotypes of women working at front desk, handling files and managing the office paper work, it was hard to notice that they are not at all a part of policies, terms which govern the business and profit. There input in company’s sale, revenue and growth has been zero, since they were never given a chance to play the role, or be the game changer. Even education wise women were better, they were getting better grades and had more pass percentage, then also they were managing calendars of business meetings in offices.

Industries which require physical strength, areas like Civil, Construction, Chemical and Petroleum, Mining, Industrial Manufacturing, even Space, were too scary. Slowly and steadily time changed, all of the above reasons, which were too prominent, which were too loud to be noticed, became soundless.

With all the disparity, prevailing in the history, what were the measure taken even by the concerned few in the power, or by one who were prominent enough to be a voice among silence?

The roar rose, in 1869, after a letter to the editor of New York Times, questioning the fact, why females in government were not being paid equally? That led to a resolution being passed by House representatives, which surfaced for sometime, only to be barred in 1870, as time passed. The Western Union Telegraph company went on strike, but was symbolized as a too early insistence for equal pay. Later in 1911, progress was made, when education sector saw a major change and added equal pay adjustment.

In 1918, due to World War I, the United States Employment Service released the list of profession, can be taken by females and thus fueling the notion in males, to take up role in War. This however dint work in the equality favor, as a mindset influenced for jobs better suited for females and more aligned for males. The change, dint work and added a layer on the discrimination brick wall. By the time, World was over with World War II, the gender equality lost its sheen. There was no doubt, world was healing and women, were expected to play their part of being a nurturer, healer and devote more time at home.

Finally, after two decades, Equal Pay Act of 1963, was signed and acted in year 1963, by President John F. Kennedy on June 10th. After three decades, In India, in the year 1976, the
Equal Remuneration Act was also brought into picture, which aimed at bringing parity between women and men, and thus enabling no discrimination on the basis of gender.

Foundation of the same, also helped in more laws to be passed in 1964, which condemned the discrimination based on race, color, religion and sex. There were further win for women aftermath. In 1978, Pregnancy Discrimination Act, made sure to safeguard female employee in her role to continue work. Also in 1991, grant of medical leaves for parents, which was irrespective of gender allowed time away for family duties. Despite of these changes only 58% of women were present in the labor workforce, and pay gap was close to 77 cents, compared to male working dollar.

Change was inevitable and it happened, but damage was deep enough. Deep enough that even after six to seven decades, we still have to work towards the change continuously for 170 years average to come to parity. From history we are now in 21st century and data shown further advocates the fact that, we still have much to accomplish.

The comparison of wages, is shown field by field and percentage of males shown in blue and women in red. (Data gathered for United States population).

The chart below, referred from WageIndicator.org and compares the salaries, Gender Wage Gap around the globe.

Let us state the data from World Economic Forum, representing the statistics which highlight the key sectors of women involvement. With the advancing years, women entered into various domains, professions, which were new to them. Fields such as Technology, Pharmaceuticals,
Law and Order, Medical, Aerospace saw more women involvement. We come across a stage, where we have women presence spanning over decades and thus giving rise to the debate of equal wages for them.

There are also some low paying professions such as Attendents, Serving Workers, Dining hosts, Cashier, Cokks and Maids, Chilcare workers etc. The comparative wage difference is also shown in the graph below.

And some of the lower paying jobs data shown below:

Also, shown below is the graph, depicting the gender pay gap in some of the highest paying jobs. The data is gathered from the publicly available research from Harvard University, after considering factors of Age, Education and working hours.
To sum up, the discussion over problem stated above, in order to curb the pay gap, some of the existing scenarios need to be tackled in a different yet effective manner. Women tend to take a back seat once they have children, as it is their natural job to manage family. This task needs to be divided equally now. We are moving towards parental leaves, where both father and mother can take time off to take care of their duties and manage family together. This change will help in better figures than current of 7.3% of employed mothers to 4.9% of fathers'.

Improving the culture and flexible work policies will enable working females to manage their family and career a better way. This change is predestined in jobs that demands long flexible hours. There has to be a significant change in the way work is being rewarded as of now. Provide better feedback, set the expectations from clearly, understand the obstacle women face, use transparency, and focus on increasing the pay equity graph. Evaluate the hiring process, look where we are setting the baseless expectations, and why? Recruit correct skillset, understand the anatomy of both the genders, provide correct set of time offs for both of them. One cannot bear the burden of another. Giving additional task to men will not only fume the feeling of bias, but will also provoke them to be the one who are blamed. Even glass is not full for them, so making sure, we are talking about equality not partiality. Increasing the value of work which is being paid low, as research confirms, women take up low paid job and are stuck there. These job area need better scrutiny, and an encouragement to progress towards better paying targets.

On the other hand, much of the task also needs to be managed from women’s part as well. They need to speak up, be more vocal and must have well self-realization of their worth. If they will try to change the world at once, it will be an impossible mountain to climb. So, manage the immediate threat first, change one scenario, speak for oneself, and then move ahead, and World will change on its own.
As a working female, researching the subject of Gender pay Gap, which is very interesting to me and is equally important for my future, asks me to debate further. I am in the zone for more than half of a decade, and in order to soar to success, it is important to find a solution which will be concrete and might result in a solid base. As a equally capable women, I demand to be treated equally, expect similar opportunities, equal roles and importance in decision making, drawing policies and coming to terms. No doubt, I belive the laws and amendments are in place for a reason and although there is no denying the fact that discrimination exists, time is changing. As expected, female will continue proving their worth is every field, even playing their role as mother and raising a male child who will appreciate the woman worth, belive her to be intelligent, is compassionate enough and value the hard work women have put in the well being of the society.

Let us work together to build a common world, with abundant opportunities for both male and female and pass on best of our work for future generations.

References:


Does The Sheen of Motherhood Leave behind Every Other Success in a Woman’s Life?

Priyam Singh
Noida, U.P. India

NEXT SLIDE

This is a question that emerged in the presenter’s mind almost in a Joycean manner right from the observations in childhood. Every time a woman was married in the locality or the family, the next thing we overheard was questions around “is there a good news”? or in some time the news of a baby born. Never again did that woman make so much news. In a very strange thing for a child to wonder, my question was did she not do any other thing worthy of being discussed? The Beauty pageant of my country asked one of the contestants ‘if a woman could be fulfilled without being a mother’? This question really troubled me. Eventually, I grew up in a home and an India that supported women’s education and gave much impetus upon their other achievements. Several women did wonderfully, became doctors, scientists, engineers, academics even some astronauts, the most memorable being Kalpana Chawla. The question did not go away. Whatever the woman became, motherhood had to be the last thing heard about her or her being maligned for choosing to be more of a career woman than care for her children reached my ears. Most importantly, the latter was said about women close to me. I did not know then what ‘personal is political’ meant but I set on a journey to discover it.

To begin with the comprehensive analysis of the topic, let us recount the abstract of this paper which talks of women like biologist and writer of Silent Spring- Rachael Carson who was questioned on her efforts to point out the harmful effects of DDT on the lines of concern for genetics when she did not have her own children. She was in fact being utmost maternal by looking after the entire environment and we owe her our environmental awareness. Besides, there was no requirement to bring up a question on her choices, whatever it maybe. Another woman(Indian) who topped the 1959 Bar exam in UK and who recently became a mother was awarded by being titled ‘Mother-in-Law’ in one of the newspapers’ headlines. While it does sound ingenious, the fact that she was also a mother could not be dissociated from her meritorious success. Roland Barthes Mythologies in 1957 spoke humourously of the description in Elle magazine of women de letters as a producer of children as importantly as the number of novels they had written. It seems from these and the various medical facilities and investment into child bearing research that indeed, very few fields are as worthily employed.

NEXT SLIDE

The questions that will help us answer our concerns in the paper are: What are the differences between mothers and childless women?, are there different reactions to a woman who chooses to be a mother and one who does not?, how does a culture through its books and media look upon its women’s choices of opting out of motherhood or being involuntarily unable to
reproduce?, is a woman allowed the free choice devoid of family pressures to make the personal
decision of opting for or against motherhood and how to handle it?, does it affect her career at
various stages of life?, does the status of motherhood give a woman privileges or discriminate
her at workplace ?, what is patriarchal motherhood and is there a resistance to it?

These questions will be explored on the basis of interviews of about thirty women of varying ages
in North India and on the knowledge gained from research conducted and papers written by
several women academicians on South Indian women and of those in other countries. A
questionnaire was used and a personal interaction was followed in most cases. Although the
numbers included in the research are quite restricted, what they have to say is interesting,
challenging and empowering. Also, some observations of women academicians which are
accessible to me by virtue of being in the university will also be presented for responding to the
questions stated.

Next slide
From the first impression an individual would have formed of a woman, the mother is deified as
sacrificing and replete with unconditional love. So is the dichotomy of the nature between
childless women and mothers real? It seems on questioning women of an older generation, the
one in their fifties that it was and is more so for their children. However, with respect to modern
Indian women, there is a more balanced outlook. This probably has to do with the different kind
of indoctrination these women have grown up with having learnt the importance of finance, self-
sufficiency and provided with at most facilities as possible. They say they have been taught to also
take care of their own desires, not just their husbands, in-laws and children. However, while some
“choices” may be available, according to Samira Kawash in ‘New directions in Motherhood
Studies’, depicts how while some women were profoundly shaped by their age, race, income,
education, no matter what their position, becoming a mother meant a decrease in autonomy,
economic security, health, and happiness. Many childless women themselves expressed that
ultimately it was a choice between motherhood and career, “I just couldn’t see myself doing both
equally well”, said a woman from Ireland as stated in the essay Women’s voluntary childlessness :
A radical rejection of motherhood by Maura Kelly. A woman who is a mother always faces a
dual burden of negotiating both professional and personal/ family commitments and the essay
titled “Women Academic Scientists in India’, speaks of a measure of success of a man would be
professional recognition, awards, and the highest honours. On the other hand, most of the
respondents (80.5%) felt that a successful woman is one who can balance both home and career.
So, women are not let off the hook in every domain. The Time Use Survey conducted by the
Ministry of Programme Implementation [Government of India (2000)], shows that women spend
about twice the time that men do in activities relating to taking care of the children, the sick and
the elderly. So, yes there is no doubt that there is a clear distinction visible between mothers and
non-mothers.

NEXT SLIDE
Coming to reactions to women who are childless, Boston University researcher Catherine
Reissman finds it to be very stark in South India. Actually, it is true of most of India and irrespective
of religion and secular practices. Respect lies with every woman who is a mother, be it Christian,
Muslim, Adivasi or Hindu. When married women travel on trains, they are asked as a matter of
fact about how many children they have or when they plan to have them. Social functions are
evaded by these women to avoid such direct questions about their fertilization plans. Parents from both the sides persuade the women to conceive so as to initiate the family lineage further and also for consolidating the arranged marriage relationship and their marriage. While, married women who remain childless in India are invisible in social research, they are highly visible in their families and communities. Women who cannot become mothers are called ‘macchi’, referring to an animal that cannot breed and of the women who are childless few have made the choice voluntarily. In U.S too, 28% made the choice of freedom from maternity while the rest only suffered from inability to become pregnant.

Similar reactions are evident from Africa through its various novels be it Nigerian Buchi Emechata’s Joys of Motherhood, Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart etc. United States madness for pregnancy is apparent from its paparazzi printing news after news of pregnant celebrities even if these personalities are not pregnant. While the U.K Prime Minister is without a child, that is considered an representation for career oriented women of higher ranks and not the case with the rest of the nation. The childless women are either made an exception or brought into the fold by making them the mother of the entire nation or state. Mother, then becomes a very important symbol and Indian history is witness to it as the country fought for independence in the name of Bharat Mata (Mother India). Contemporary examples of this manifestation can be considered through the narratives of the recently passed away, Tamil politics veteran political leader J.Jayalalitha(India) and presently stationed Chancellor for the fourth time in Germany, Angela Merkel. Both have been childless women who have ruled the roost but are still cornered into the mother denomination by being referred to as the beloved Amma or ‘mother’ and Mutti or ‘mother’ in their respective heartlands.

The earliest expression of motherhood in Indian cinema or soaps is of women yearning to become mothers. The soaps continue to have women desperately yearning for children like in ‘Yeh hain Mohabbatein’ whereas a supporting role of the lead heroine in Pavitra Rishta delays her pregnancy much to the ire of her mother-in-law. The movies have come up with alternate options of adoption, surrogacy or using a sperm donor through critically acclaimed films like Filhaal and Vicky Donor. But not one mainstream film has shown of a woman abandoning the idea of becoming a mother.

In December 2014, the English translation of Tamil writer Perumul Murugan’s 2010 novel Madhorubagan (One Part Woman) was published. It had the story of a childless Gounder couple where the woman consented to sex with a stranger at a temple festival’s fertility ritual. Although the idea of sex outside marriage created a controversy, motherhood per se was not opposed. Many novels in India deal with bringing up a child, most recently ‘Maidless in Mumbai’, by Payal Kapadia is about the compelling but often conflicting desires of a mother to be the nurturer that her baby needs her to be, and the warrior-at-workplace that she wants to become. At such crossroads, reviewer Avantika Pokhriyal says that “modern’ Indian women continue to find themselves alone, trying to grapple with the ever mounting pressures of the personal and societal kind while the father gets away with a Facebook update and babysitting on the nights he is free.”
If the woman is involuntarily childless, she sometimes suffers abuses as ‘macchi’, ‘banj’ etc but at others are offered sympathy or guided to better options of conceiving through test tube baby, womb rent, various spiritual and series of medical rituals.

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Do women have a personal choice to decide their role in a marriage? It does not seem to be the case where women are mothers. Whether working or not working, they play the role of the primary caretaker. The professions in which they have been allowed to work are also ones requiring less time like teaching in schools or part time engagements. ‘Committed Mothers and Well adjusted Children, a London School of Economics study on Privatization, Early Years Education and Motherhood in Calcutta’, states Nita Kumar’s observation in a paper on history of education in South Asia. It says that it is devoid of women as mothers, who became characterized as ahistorical and apolitical, one of the problems being unattractiveness of certain spaces inhabited by women' themselves: ‘mother’, ‘home’, ‘childcare’ versus ‘nation' and intelligentsia. The paper goes on to reflect how a street full of children is also replete with waiting mothers upon whom the project of raising a nation of accomplished individuals lie. As nobody can be an overnight success and every environment of school or home is important, the patriarchal world of India uses a woman’s sense of responsibility to ensconce her to complete this project. Even working women in the role of teachers in school expect some moulding of the child from the home base. Thus, a woman’s biggest accomplishment is her children’s career.

There have been some exceptional cases in India with regard to motherhood. An unmarried woman, former Miss Universe and actor, Sushmita Sen had to fight a legal battle to adopt a child because it was thought that an unmarried young woman is not capable of taking care of a child. She argued in court that if a married woman of equal age could bear a child why couldn’t she take care of one. Her credibility as a mother was questioned on account of her well known celebrity status in life. While for many motherhood can stand in the way of success, for her, her success stood in the way of her choice of motherhood. It did look to begin with that her success stood any relevance, in fact it was an obstruction in her way of choosing the life of a mother. But India progressed as the case went in her favour.

A campaign started in India by Amazon is called ‘Mom, Be a Girl Again’. It has sweet little advertisements of children giving back in some way or another a chance for their mom to become the exceptionally talented people they held the promise of or merely to partake of their long lost interest. It depicts how all these women have subdued their interests in the well being of their children. Thus, Motherhood has been taking precedence over so many generations but at least we are talking about it openly today.

Girls of ‘marriageable age’ or for that matter even a ‘suitable boy’ of the age who do not wish to have a child voluntarily are never able to talk about it with their ‘would be spouse’ in an arranged marriage setting. It is unspeakable even in twenty first century to make the choice of not becoming a mother. In fact, during the interviews it was found out that one of the interviewees had categorically been asked about her stance on feminism and whether or not she believed in having a child. As another interviewee pointed out that while the choice of being child free is legitimate, it is important that one tells the fiancé. However, that is extremely difficult and
requires mammoth courage in this social setting of India. There is a very wide chance that a woman of this thought process no matter how accomplished will not find a groom in India. Upon speaking to her parents, she is told that it is her immaturity and she will learn to like the idea in time. Sometimes, she is even scolded.

**NEXT SLIDE**

When young women go for job interviews, they are pre-emptively asked about their marriage and motherhood plans. To every woman, it is a basis of discrimination. Despite all the learning in the world, a fairplay for women does not exist. Christena Colclough in her essay ‘Motherhood and Fairplay at work’, gives the account of a school teacher Vivien Palmer who reported her case to the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland. She had applied for a full teaching position at the school she was teaching in a non-tenured position. The knowledge of her pregnancy, she suspected kept her from getting the job which eventually she attained.

To infer the effect that motherhood has upon careers of women or their presence at the workplace, we could begin by admitting that biology is real as stated clearly by Amy Kittelstrom of Sonoma State University. She said that the sophistication we have reached at by the term of gender must be dismissed because sex is more real than gender. Easily, a man or a woman without children will be preferred for permanent or better position because of the time and priority she will make in her life. There is no academy which actively seeks to discriminate against women but the silence on discrimination is unavoidable and the question remains about who will blow the whistle on the hiring committee, anywhere in the world. As Maura Kelly says, in ‘Voluntary Childlessness: A Radical Rejection of Motherhood’, studies depict that women suffer greater “opportunity costs” at childbearing age. Even if she belongs to higher socio-economic strata, her husband is more likely to be allowed to take up better economic and well positioned designations.

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In most countries, a maternity leave or a leave of hundred and twenty days is available for expectant mothers. Men expect women to behave like ‘women’, but when a woman faces a problem typical to her sex such as pregnancy, it is frowned upon. Some colleagues may not be very kind in such situations. When I took maternity leave a second time, a colleague remarked that I had an advantage of being a woman since I could take a three months holiday after every five years, said one of the colleague. One woman faculty [member] in our institute applied for maternity leave 22 years ago. She was denied on the grounds of crushing teaching load. I did not face this situation, but male colleagues were not happy when I took maternity leave.

Most recently, an Australian Parliamentarian, Larissa Waters breastfed in the senate chamber of the Parliament. Last year, it was called lamentable by the Interior Minister of Spain when a fellow parliamentarian fed her baby in the parliament and another said it was frankly unnecessary. It has happened in Italian Parliament also and now a couple of weeks ago, Indian Member of Legislative Assembly Angoorlata Deka asked for the provision of a feeding chamber in a Parliament which was evaded by stating that her quarter was right next to the Assembly building and she could see her baby whenever required. While maternity benefits applied to most women in India, the politicians could not stay away from the assembly as elected members and miss
debates and discussion. One is reminded of the saying that women can be expected to make not merely coffee but also policy.

While most women I interviewed accepted and research by different people on women in India suggest, most women suffer a loss of productivity at the crucial age of their children, at initial stages and around the time when they are to give their class tenth Board examinations or competitive exams. It is more often than not, women who take leave and accompany and be present for their child’s support at these critical junctures. They take leave or delay joining better positions as they are the ones held responsible for the failure of the child to perform well. Most women admit it and do not express any anguish at it. There is loss of scientific research but it is taken astride for the management of the family.

On the academic circles that I walk in, every day I see women waiting to get their children board their vans to the crèches before they board their cabs to their workplace or coming late by taking mornings off as they went to attend a parent teacher meeting of their child or a function by taking the evening half off. Often I hear the husbands were busy in a meeting or could not get out of one very important one, for their child. But, the mother makes her time despite loss of her reputation as leaves are not easily granted to her either. She may have to adjust her classes and negotiate with the Dean and then manage her transport and go, be there for a child. The psychoanalysis of a post delivery mother or one who accomplishes such tasks is not taken into account. Women are discriminated for having to take leaves even when it is lawfully granted like maternity benefits and upon return feel the stress to cover up for what is taken by many men as privilege. Women in trying to provide for home, office and special needs of the child often end up missing meals and doing things for themselves. It creates a nutritionally deficient person and no one pays attention to her needs. Motherhood is more taxing than blissful until children become self sufficient.

Accounts of women like ICICI Bank’s Managing Director who wrote an open letter to her daughter during the time of her tenth Board Exams and of Arundhati Bhattacharya, State Bank of India(SBI), Chairperson is very moving. Chanda Kocchar recalls in her letter how when newspapers abroad splashed the breaking news of her becoming Managing Director, it surprised her daughter who only then realized the level of stress and work, her mother was managing, who otherwise was merely her mother at home. She also talks of the day she took leave to be with her daughter for her first Board exam and she expressed surprise as she was not used to it and this hurt her mother. Why should it hurt her mother unless somewhere, at some place it never got out of her head that she had to play that role which she may have been unable to efficiently? In 2008, when there was a major financial meltdown and there were rumours of ICICI Bank also being in jeopardy, she had taken a couple of hours off to cheer her son at the squash match. People recognized and asked me if I was Chanda Kochhar from ICICI Bank and when I replied in the affirmative they said that if I could still find time to attend a tournament in the midst of a crisis, it meant that the bank was in safe hands and they need not worry about their money! Amazing, how being a mother to her son re-ified her success at her professional front.

The story of SBI Chairperson is one which defies obstructions in a woman’s path of being a mother and it also emphasizes immense womanly support. In order to take up key positions in New York,
not her home base she was accompanied by aunt who took care of her daughter while she went out to take the challenging financial world by its bulls. However, due to Visa issues, her aunt had to go back and her child had not much option but to go with her or have a neglected care. In the earlier days of her career, Arundhati’s husband did the unthinkable by resigning from his job and one that was no less prestigious, a faculty position at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) to move with her. Arundhati also states the roles of several mentors, even men who supported her and persuaded her not to quit at times when she saw her motherly duties were absolutely affected and eventually she became the head of the Bank. If you wonder why many women do not head the top ranks, not everyone gets that kind of support the SBI Chairperson got.

The success stories of women like Chanda Kochhar and Arundhati Bhattacharya tell us that if a patriarchal sense of motherhood is tweaked, there can be opportunity for every woman to reach the top. What is patriarchal motherhood? It is the idea of motherhood where women are responsible for every activity of her child and needs to be omnipresent for their needs. No other person can step up to provide just as well for the children and it is believed that her absence is a lack for the child forever. Instead, women are propagating a sense of self belief where supported by family members, mothers-in-law, friends and maids, they are entering more difficult domain and defeating stereotypes. Women academicians have appreciated the role these people have played in their lives, when her supposed primary responsibilities of the household are taken care of and they have not just gone out to work but also visited places abroad for scientific and arts research. Thus, a feminist mothering is not an aversion to parenting but a move away from obsessed and intensive mothering which remained the domain of the woman, only.

While there are resistances in India and the world, they are at individual levels. There is no organized level of resistance to motherhood and its typical norms. Some women use logic of avoiding the mommy track- a delay in career growth due to indulgence or necessity of child care, motherhood penalty, second shift in the household as a man’s work ends at sunset, a woman’s work never ends and writing and vocally expressing the difficulties that accompany motherhood along with countering unbreakable glass ceilings at the workplace, choose to opt out of it. Educated women with occupations that create a separate identity for them can hold the currency to quit on becoming mothers. Some women create the greatest challenge to femininity when they state that there is an absence of maternal instinct. This absence makes them selfish in the eyes of the world but they are ready to be called so. In fact they counter it by saying that it would be selfish to have a child for their own desires and not care for them enough. When they are forced on one account or another to try motherhood, it angers and irritates them and they feel as if they are infantilized and do not know their minds. It is found that while they may not want children of their own without co-opting them into idea of motherhood, they still love mothering the children of their extended family members. Using humour they say, they just don’t want to add to the population of the world and conceited as it may seem, wish to travel and explore the world.

It is not so simple for lesser qualified women. Some state the absence of help from other quarters but work despite being a mom, in the guise of providing a better standard of living for their children. While economic independence has enabled women to make a choice, it does not keep her away from judgmental eyes. But if amply supported by husbands on the grounds of a good
relationship, they become more equipped as found in Catherine’s research on women in South India.

As stated earlier in the essay there is very little literature on women as mothers especially in recent times. The Women’s Movement in India has transformed into NGOization of feminism and is reduced to career feminism or 9to5 feminism. Writer Arundhati Roy has critiqued it for becoming a well mannered, salaried job. Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary, she says. Professionalisation has enabled women with little or no political commitments to practice feminism as a profession rather than as politics. Very few are concerned with working on reforms aimed not only at easing the burden on mothers who work outside the home but also at reducing the high economic penalties imposed on mothers for whom unpaid caring is their primary occupation. Instead they face allegations of privilege for receiving childcare benefits if any which are found to be inefficient in any case. While earlier magazines like Signs would publish review on books but the last time Signs had published a review of books on motherhood was 1999 (Forcey 1999). This trickle of attention is in dramatic contrast to the previous decade; in the period from 1995 to 1996, Signs published three review essays formulating the terrain of motherhood studies at that time and discussing in detail more than thirty titles published in 1993–94 alone. Frontiers, another magazine published ‘Motherhood and Materialism’ in 1999 and its next focus on the topic was only in 2009. Samira Kawash as a director of one of the seven PhD programs in women and gender studies found not one application that proposed study on mothering or motherhood.

NEXT SLIDE
Why is publication important? If I recall right, nineteenth century was a time of publications of several books on etiquette and manners as well as correct behaviour for a woman, their conduct as mothers and wives which aimed at setting a standard of performance for women. It has taken hold over the imagination of women for decades before it was rattled by the feminist movement and the same needs to be done by writing on motherhood, about telling one’s own stories. Whether it be the women I interviewed, or those interviewed by researcher in South India, all said they have felt liberation on recounting their personal experiences. These collections of anecdotes or books including Mama, PhD(2008); Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory(2008), Parenting and Professing(2005) suggest various possibilities for negotiating a career path in an arena that is open to women so long as they subsume their personal lives to the demands of their job, a job that assumes that someone else is taking care of family and domestic concerns. The stories of success also provide valuable role models and encouragement for women, who frequently find themselves isolated in their departments or institutions and desperately in need of mentors or role models. In a way, it is talking back to patriarchy and reclaiming the feminine space.

NEXT SLIDE
Thus, we can answer the question of whether the sheen of Motherhood overtakes every other success in a woman’s life? The world is entering a time when there is more liberty for the woman and her educational achievements equip her to make her choices but there is no doubt that the choices continue to be disapproved. The judgemental tone has not yet been shunned to silence. Women will only be equal out in the field of occupation when men will become equal within the home. Till then, women will continue to measure their success through their daughter’s flight. The day the daughter and son do not turn back and question why their mother was absent at this
occasion or that, the mother has time for a wholesome meal and she can decide to venture out for a professional endeavour without having to think how will everything at home be managed, that will be the independence day for mothers. Perhaps in these days of diminished political expectations, the best we can hope for to conclude, as one contributor to *Mothering in the Third Wave* puts it, "I believe that how we live our lives positively affects individual and community attitudes". Our daily practice serves as a powerful form of social activism". Mothers need to take care of just one more person and that is ‘them selves’.

**NEXT SLIDE**

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Mexican Street Art as an Instrument of Social Fight and Political Protest

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Street art in Mexico is seen mostly as a communication device for informing and persuading. Its aim is to raise awareness of social and political issues and both, the large format (murals) and the quick and easy to apply techniques (stencils) provide a powerful platform for reaching the public.

Mexico has a long history of revolutionary art where the walls have been treated as canvas for expressions of social anger and injustice. The mural movement started shortly after the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1921. José Vasconcelos, who was named the Secretary of Public Education by the president Álvaro Obregón, sought the help of the renowned artists, mainly Los tres grandes: David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. The murals were supposed to communicate the post-revolutionary ideas and the national history to the masses as at that time many of the Mexican citizens were illiterate. The muralists used the figure of the native Indian to symbolize the reborn country. What is more their rich linguistic legacy became an inspiration, many names and words from the indigenous languages were used in the works.

While, according to the pedagogue Piotr Zańko, the main theme of the Western European street art can be considered as anti-consumerism and anti-corporation and the Polish one as existential¹, in modern Mexico the murals are still regarded as protest strategies and a visual dialogue with the public. The painters have often been at the forefront of movements for political change. The street art depicts the political and social problems Mexico is facing nowadays: political repression, grinding poverty, human trafficking, the perils of migration, threats to the indigenous or environmental damage.

Since in Latin America we can observe a strong street culture, where the masses are out in the streets, parks and food markets having a chat with their friends or neighbours, dancing in the evening in the market square or having a drink, no wonder the walls are treated as a place where the ideas of minority can be expressed, noticed and remembered. If the work is produced under state sponsorship it will last longer and we will know its author like it happens with many large murals, but as far as stencils are concerned, they are more ephemeral, duplicated, created inexpensively and mostly anonymous due to the fear of being counterattacked by the local authorities.

Lyman Chaffee, a political science professor at California State University Dominguez Hills, has observed that the use of a proper colour and design affect visual impact², so it is not only the

¹ P. Zańko, „Zabijemy was słowami”. Prowokacje kulturowe w przestrzeni miejskiej i w internecie, Warszawa 2012, p. 200
place or technique that matters in street art. Colours are used by commercial advertisers in order to manipulate customers’ emotions. The red decoration, for instance, will be seen in fast food restaurants, as it evokes energy and hunger, it literally makes you eat faster. Also orange makes people feel in a hurry. Both of the hues generate a feeling of excitement and alert. If you add black, then they will convey emotions of revolution, death and violence. The artists as well are conscious of the fact that colours influence the mind therefore they choose them carefully. To illustrate this I will provide an example of the stencil by Mónica Barajas which depicts María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, a Human Rights Activist and a candidate for presidency in the next year election. According to Chaffee, nationalistic groups opt for national colours while revolutionary groups adapt combination of reds, blacks and yellows. Barajas added a caption that says El pueblo manda y el gobierno obedece (The nation rules and the government obeys). Both, the painted words and the portrait of the woman are in black. The red star is the symbol of EZLN (The Zapatista Army of National Liberation, a political and militant group based in Chiapas that defends the rights of the indigenous) and the three yellow flowers stand for food and femininity. The flowers of squash blossom have been used in the Mexican cuisine since Pre-hispanic times. They are an important ingredient of the typical dishes such as quesadillas and empanadas, and are sold by women from Colima and Tuxpan. The leaves underneath represent epazote, a medicinal plant native to southern Mexico. Barajas stresses out the fact that the activist is also a respectable healer. Patricio Martínez, being an indigenous Nahua woman from Tuxpan, Jalisco, has been chosen this year as a spokesperson by National Indigenous Congress, an organisation of communities, towns and tribes of Mexico which was founded in 1996. Although the majority of the Mexican population is non-white, it is considered very difficult for an indigenous person, and even more so for a woman, to obtain a high position in the political hierarchy. Unfortunately some people still believe that the indigenous Mexicans should be content with the lowest status in the society.

A similar stencil in its design circulated in Comala and Colima, Barajas created it in 2015. It shows Pita Zamora, another indigenous woman and activist who defended Zacualpan, a community located 25 km from Villa de Alvarez that supplies the town and the capital of the state Colima with drinking water. In the premises of the community a gold mine was going to be opened which meant that the water would have been polluted. The mine had already a permission from the local government to start the construction but the project finally failed. Having faced the threat of possible and irreversible environmental damage, Pita Zamora gave uplifting speeches on numerous occasions. Barajas remembers that once she said Estoy aquí por que soy mujer, y no me dejo pisar (I am here because I am a woman and I will not let anyone trample on me). These words inspired the artist and she included a comment to her work: Indígena, no te dejes pisar. Nosotros también tenemos derechos (Indigenous, don’t let others trample on you. We also have rights.) Below the image of Zamora, Barajas painted a squash blossom, a corn and an earthenware container to carry water. The flowers and the vegetable, as in her previous work, stand for the Pre-hispanic identity, fertility of the land, the core of the traditional Mexican food, without them it is difficult to imagine elaboration of any dish.

A totally different character represents another Barajas’ stencil Bailando sin sostén (Dancing without a bra). In 2013, together with a friend Miguel Valle, Barajas set up an

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3 Ibidem, p. 6
independent publisher Hoy lo leo Cartonera (Today I’m reading it Cartonera). The name Cartonera refers to the social, political and artistic publishing movement that began in Argentina in 2003 due to the devaluation of Argentinian peso and the following economic crisis. The movement later on spread to other Latin American countries. Thanks to the inexpensive method of production, books became affordable. What is more, it provided an opportunity for unknown authors to be published and promoted literacy through organizing literature workshops and book fairs. The covers of Cartonera books are made of cardboard, hand painted and sold mainly on the streets.

This time the stencil appeared not only on the city walls, but on the book cover. In 2014 the artist organized a literature project for female poets of Colima and Bailando sin sostén, a book of erotic poems, came into being. The theme of Barajas work could be perceived as revolutionary and shocking by the Mexican society where the religion and the culture of el machismo are highlighted on a daily basis and a female orgasm and masturbation are still a taboo matter. It depicts a woman looking at herself in a mirror. Her eyes are half closed, she tilted her head back and opened her sensual lips. We witness an intimate moment of sexual pleasure where a man is nowhere to find, he is no longer the giver of pleasure. The woman is not submitting her body to his will. She is exploring her own sexuality, she is in control.

Hoy lo leo Cartonera sold 500 books of erotic poetry and opened a discussion of female sexuality and the role of women in the modern Mexican society during various literature events organized in Colima. Mónica Barajas lives in Colima and works in the Museum of Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo in Nogueras.

Similarly to Barajas, Paola Delfín, proves that wall painting can be treated as a protest strategy. Her Susana mural was created in Chihuahua during the Centropolis Art Festival in 2014. The female-centric painting alludes to the dangerous situations women have to face in Mexico every day. Whether they are kidnapped and forced to work as prostitutes, raped coming back from a party or beaten to death because they disobeyed their husbands, women cope with a range of aggressive behaviour practically in every aspect and moment of their lives. In Mexico, where social norms allow the violence to be ignored or accepted, 63% of women have suffered abuse. According to the study Violence and Femicide in Mexico: Characteristics, trends and new expressions in the states of Mexico. 1985-2010 conducted for United Nations Women, in 2010 six women were murdered each day.

The woman from the mural seems to be floating in the air. She is wearing a pink bra, navy blue trousers and sport shoes. If you were to doubt whether she is fast asleep or just relaxing, the road sign that is located close to the mural will help you to figure it out: Alto a los feminicidios (Stop femicides), it says.

Victoria Villasana, another street artist, is a native of Guadalajara, but her work can be seen both in the streets of London, where she lived for 12 years, and other places in Mexico. Villasana uses embroidery as an element of the images she creates, which makes them unique, not only for the aesthetic sake but also for its known therapeutic properties. She cuts and glues pieces of textiles and wool to her photos. The embroidery, deeply rooted in Mexican traditional

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4 T. Incháustegui Romero, M. López Barajas, C. Echarri Cánovas et al., Violence and Femicide in Mexico: Characteristics, trends and new expressions in the states of Mexico. 1985-2010, Mexico City 2013, p. 23
arts and crafts, accompanied me through my visits to Chiapas and Oaxaca, the southern states. The vivid colours arranged in contrasting stripes, flowers, birds or little dolls are almost everywhere, they form the pattern on handbags, blouses, shawls, tablecloths... Once you see the handmade clothes typical for that region, you will never mistake them for anything else. Like Barajas, Villasana adds a commentary to her art as it is in the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz piece. Sor Juana was the beloved Mexican poet and philosopher who would say: No estudio para saber más, sino para ignorar menos (I do not study in order to know more but to ignore less). Villasana rises her voice in defence of the rights of women to education. The possibility for a woman to obtain a university degree in a small town or an indigenous community is scarce, as women get married at a very young age. If education is a way to liberate yourself from oppression and violence, then definitely it is worth fighting for.

As seen from the examples above, the street art in Mexico is a powerful tool of expression for people otherwise often powerless in a state which does not provide justice and equality for all its citizens. The work of the three female Mexican artists inspires and points to solutions. They have treated the public space as a democratic, open and free of charge canvas. The streets have become a forum where the artists raise their voices against the attempts of silencing the oppressed.

References


Writing Lebanese Women into History: Masculinity, Femininity and the Civil War

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to the field of knowledge of gender, war and militarization by addressing the context of the Lebanese civil war. It provides a feminist analysis of the war and unpacks its gendered constructs and dynamics. It focuses on Lebanese Christian women, who were active militants in the Kataeb and/or Lebanese Forces militias, at any point during the war. Those women presented a noteworthy case to look at, and were also selected as part of the insider research approach adopted. It examines the “masculine” roles they embodied and questions whether their transgressions of patriarchal gendered expectations created possibilities for advancing women’s status in Lebanon.

The paper examines the motivations behind those women’s active engagement with militias and their parents’ and society’s perceptions of these activities. It then explores the training they undertook and the various roles they took up in support of militia activities. Third, the research analyses the masculinization and feminization of these roles, by revealing the features of the decent Christian militiaman, and the consequences of women’s embodiment of those features. Finally, it investigates the situation of these women today, their perceptions of Lebanese women in general, and the implications of their involvement in war on women’s status in Lebanese society.

Data was collected through a series of qualitative interviews with 10 former Lebanese women fighters from Christian backgrounds. This paper argues that Lebanese Christian militiawomen were able to break significant boundaries and transgress gendered social norms in a defining manner. They were able to create a sustainable momentum for women’s advancement in Lebanon. Nevertheless, limitations persist and much work needs to be done to break Lebanon’s patriarchal foundations.

I. Introduction

“El banet la barral!” – Respondents 5, 6 and 8.

Towards the end of the Lebanese civil war, a Lebanese Forces (LF) female unit was stationed with male units in the Kleiat barrack. When the Kleiat battle broke out, between the LF and the Army units loyal to General Aoun, the “girls” were ordered to flee, while the “men” stayed back to defend the women and their cause.

The Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), founded on patriotism and sectarianism, is complex and ambiguous. (Deeb, 1980; Hiro, 1993; O’Ballance, 1998). However, its intricate details fall outside the scope of this research. The Kataeb was founded as a political party in 1936 and was a major player in Lebanon’s independence struggle from the French mandate. The Lebanese Forces (LF) was established in 1976 as a joint command of all right-wing Christian militias. It became an independent militia in 1985 after internal clashes, under the leadership of Samir Geagea. Both LF and Kataeb are currently active political parties (Kataeb website, 2016; LF website, 2016).

I write about women in the Lebanese civil war by answering women-centered inquiries, to make their experiences relevant. Accordingly, I answer the following: In what ways did militant women, loyal to the LF and/or Kataeb militias, embody “masculine” roles during the war? How, if at all, did this create opportunities for further transgressions of traditional roles for Lebanese women, and serve to advance their overall status?

1 “Girls outside!”
2 Village in the Kesrouan District, Mount Lebanon Governorate.
3 Geagea is also known by his nickname: “Al Hakim” or The Doctor. The end of the war consisted of clashes between Geagea’s LF and Lebanese Army units loyal to General Aoun.
I do not write a Herstory, but analyze the gendered dynamics within the “Christian side”, through which those women’s voices can exist in a recorded account. I look at women’s involvement as a political choice, not a personal one. I examine the motivations behind women’s engagement with Christian militias, and perceptions of their activities. I then explore the training and various roles they took up during the war. I continue by analyzing the masculinization and feminization of these roles, by revealing the features of the decent Christian militiaman, and women’s embodiment of those features. Finally, I investigate the situation of these women today, their own perceptions, and the implications of their involvement in war on women’s status in Lebanese society.

II. Literature Review

**Gender, war and militarization**

The connections between gender, war and militarization appear through different sub-themes. Literature on military masculinity shows its exclusive access to combat and reveals war as a masculine field (Mann, 2015). Masculinity is set as an achievement, with agency associated with maleness, and powerlessness with femaleness (Moser & Clark, 2005). Military masculinity is therefore developed through domination, heroism and aggressiveness (Hopton, 2003; Kovitz, 2003; Sjoberg, 2014). It is constructed around derogation of women, and feminization is used as a devalorization technique that reproduces gender hierarchies. Military masculinity can therefore be depicted as a macho extreme that embraces misogyny (Higate, 2003; Peterson, 2010; Taber, 2011). The literature fails to address the Middle East, but is conclusive concerning the toxicity of military masculinity.

Moreover, women traditionally engage in support roles during war (Sjoberg, 2014). Sexual division of labor is clear within armies, such as the Congolese armed forces, British army, or Israeli defense forces where intelligence or administrative work is feminized (Baz & Stern, 2012; Higate, 2003; Rimalt, 2007). Armies use women to control their sexuality (camp followers), extend unpaid carework (nurses) or legitimize their projects (protecting wives). Motherhood is also recurring and examples in western militaries and Islamist movements depict women as mothers of nations, producing soldiers and martyrs (Enloe 1983; 2000; Holt & Jawad, 2013). Women in combat roles are seen as a military and sexual challenge. Although participation in war may seem liberating, Carroll (2015, p.47) warns that “the idea that armed conflict can lead to women’s and girls’ empowerment must be treated with caution”. In fact, women have to work twice as hard, and are often recruited out of shortages (Enloe, 2000; Taber, 2011).

Sjoberg and Gentry (2015) explore the way men’s violence is normalized and suggest three narratives depoliticizing women’s violence: The mother narrative depicts women engaging in violence as avenging men/children; the monster narrative portrays those women as irrational and pathologises their behavior to depoliticize it; the whore narrative depicts women as sexually incapable, deviants, or lesbians. The above three narratives inadvertently strip women of their choice and political decision-making and take away their agency.

A final critical point concerns opportunities created by women combatants, particularly relevant for my research. Taber (2011) is skeptical towards the extent that transgressions through the military can enlarge gender boundaries. Additionally, Tasker (2002) examines what she depicts as a female military masculinity, which “embodies both the transgression of gendered codes and a longing for belonging” (p.221).

**Women and war in Lebanon**

The literature on Lebanese history reveals the complexity of giving a “neutral” report of the war. Accounts of the civil war adopt a typical way of reporting historical events and neglect its gendered composition or consequences. They fail to consider women in a significant light and do not reflect the reality of their lived experiences (Deeb, 1980; O’balance, 1998; Hiro, 1993; Rabinovich, 1985). My analysis aims at bringing to light Lebanese Christian women’s experiences of the civil war.

Different forms of reports on the Lebanese war, mainly in cinema and novels, have, however, accounted for women. Nevertheless, analyses of cinema (Khatib, 2006; 2008) and novels (Accad, 1990) covering the war show how it is portrayed in a “masculine” light. With very few exceptions, the main

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4 Lebanon is a religiously plural country with eighteen sects officially recognized in the constitution.

5 There are only two exceptions in cinema with female main characters: Roger Assaf’s Ma’araka (1985), and Leyla Assaf’s Martyrs (1988). Only Martyrs depicts a woman in a combat role. Also, the only novel depicting a woman in a
protagonists are male and women’s agency and lived experiences are excluded. In Khatib’s words (2008, p.105), “Lebanese cinema is full of examples of male violence directed at bodies that act as representations of a collective transgressive other”. Accad (1990) denounces the victimization of women in relation to religion, honor, and sex, as a system of power and control.

The literature on Lebanese women combatants proves very limited. Schulze (1998) describes the war as a male event with mostly male fighters with a patriarchal nationalist agenda. Women engaged in nationalistic battles, but as subordinates and out of necessity (Schulze, 1998). Militant women faced obstacles due to traditional female-private-sphere and male-public-sphere norms. However, the war did allow them to engage in new roles and spaces. Still, women combatants were mostly present on the “Christian side”. They had various motivations for their participation, and although they engaged in typical roles, their tasks were never limited to traditional “feminine” ones, and a few did participate in combat (Schulze, 1998; Karam, 1996; 2012; Shehade; 1999).

Noteworthy are possibilities for further transgressions created by those women by entering a male-dominated world. The literature is in fact divided: some state that the war did nothing to enhance women’s status (Schulze; 1989, Makdisi, 1997), while others are cautiously optimistic (Karam 2012). Shehade (1999) insists that the war has changed traditional attitudes, but is concerned about how long the momentum created can last. Building up on those arguments, I explore whether the civil war has truly created new prospects for women in Lebanon.

III. Theoretical Framework

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell’s (1987) theory of hegemonic masculinity, as it relates to military masculinity, and to the case of the Lebanese civil war, frames my research. Connell’s (1995, p.71) definition of masculinity concerns “processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives”. She problematizes traditional ways of defining masculinity that ignore the power relations embedded in the concept. Connell (1987) develops the concept of hegemonic masculinity, constructed on relations of power and dominance, in opposition to subordinate masculinities, and on the subordination of women. A number of scholars have critiqued Connell’s theory6, to which Connell and Messerchmidt (2005) provide coherent rebuttals. This debate would be interesting to address but falls outside the scope of this dissertation. Hegemonic masculinity frames my analysis in its links to military masculinity.

Gendered Theorizing of War

My analysis is constructed around a gendered theorizing of war, to questions the power relations embedded in its constructions. It is fundamental to challenge assumptions within the conceptualization of wars, as those biases “perpetuate the lack of knowledge that research on war contains about gender issues”, which is “not incidental but structural” (Sjoberg, 2014, p.160). To correct traditional war theorizing, gender is used as a category of analysis, taking into account power and structural inequalities. This entails critically scrutinizing theories and tools, making women visible, and avoiding de-politicization of their actions (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2015). Gender analysis highlights women’s experiences when investigating an event (Sjoberg, 2014). My research thus provides an account of the Lebanese civil war through a feminist lens, to give voice to women who were involved and affected by the conflict.

IV. Methodology

Fieldwork

In addition to reviewing existing literature, this research is based on ten semi-structured interviews with Lebanese Christian women who were actively involved in the Kataeb and/or LF militias

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during the war. Those interviews provide insights on those women’s lives and on social dynamics of the war. I focus on Lebanese Christian women as women fighters were most common in the Christian right-wing militias. Moreover, the LF and Kataeb were predominant militias (Karame, 2012; Schulze, 1998; Shehade, 1999; O’Ballance, 1998; Hiro, 1993). As a Lebanese Christian woman myself, this focus allows me to be more efficient in terms of access. I thus consider myself an insider researcher, but take the responsibility of remaining self-critical. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, French and English. I acknowledge that I interpreted expressions that may not be directly translatable and refer to traditional terms where translation is inefficient. I refer to all interviewees as respondents to respect their anonymity and confidentiality. I use a qualitative approach, focused on the experiences and perspectives of those women. The aim is not to be representative, but to offer insights about those women in order to give them visibility.

Feminist Methodology and Positionality

I adopt a feminist methodology to provide an account of individuals who have been marginalized from mainstream theorizations of war. I suggest that the history of the Lebanese civil war cannot be properly understood without unpacking its gendered dynamics and uncovering gender hierarchies. In fact, “Gender identities, ideologies and institutionalized practices interact to normalize domination and mobilize violent practices” (Sjoberg and Via, 2010, p.26). Consequently, exposing those hierarchies is necessary to repair injustices and create a better and more equal society for people of all genders. Through this methodology, I listen to how those individuals perceive their own history, and seek to give them visibility in a realm from which they are often marginalized.

I recognize my privilege as a western educated woman and do not claim to speak for all Lebanese women nor for the women whose experiences I discuss. My objective is to give voice and visibility to those women by going beyond traditional accounts of the civil war. I recognize the intersections of potentially discriminating factors within the Lebanese society. I choose to focus on Lebanese Christian women as one section of this society, but I stress that a number of intersections – most obviously, class – exist within this social group.

V. Findings and Analysis

Motivations and Perceptions

Lebanese Christian women’s motivations for joining militias are varied: some were gradually influenced, while others directly sought military training (Karame, 1989, 1996). However, their ultimate motive relates to the existential threat perceived by the Christian community at the time: “You would not be able to make the sign of the cross today, if we didn’t stand and fight” (Respondent 2). Interviewees described the war as imposed and explained protecting their nation. This is widely discussed in the literature (Karame, 1996; Shehade, 1999) and characterizes militancy stemming from patriotism. Also, the entire community was mobilized, and this suggests that women were integrated out of need. This is further reaffirmed by the extraordinariness of their case: “It was amazing in our community, no one was used to this, especially since the Lebanese Army didn’t have women” (Respondent 5).

Using women out of need is typical of military institutions (Enloe 2000). While this was certainly the case for Lebanese militias, analyzing women’s position as merely that depoliticizes their actions. The very fact that they took active part in war is a transgression of social expectations, and represents a breakthrough for Lebanon. Additionally, a significant number of women joined militias because brothers or fathers were already involved. Nevertheless, reducing their involvement to family ties depoliticizes their struggle: “The fact that my brother is a man doesn’t mean he’s going to die for me, as a woman. […] I was there for the cause” (Respondent 7).

Militants’ backgrounds show a striking diversity, with some women coming from upper-middle class families, and others’ with very modest backgrounds. This variety re-politicizes motivations for engaging in war: patriotism regardless of social background. Geographic location also proved important. In fact, most militants grew up on demarcation lines, which boosted their commitment to the cause (Karame, 1996). Respondents 1 and 10 specified that their villages were surrounded, and Respondents 4 and 9 described being raised on the front lines.

A significant variable is parents’ reactions to their daughters’ war activities. Both literature (Karame, 1996; Schulze, 1998; Shehade, 1999) and fieldwork demonstrate the importance of parents’
decisions. Some women had to lie about their militia activities – re-politicizing their actions – while others were highly encouraged: “My father gave me his blessings to join the Resistance. I wouldn’t have disobeyed him” (Respondent 3). Others explained how their parents’ attitudes changed concerning militias: “My parents [...] didn’t allow me to go out after 8pm. [...] When I told [my father], [Kataeb] were recruiting Nizamiyyat’, he said, ‘Go!’ I was surprised.” (Respondent 10).

A final variable concerns society’s perceptions. All interviewees stated they were highly encouraged and did not face resistance from society. However, perceptions were divided concerning combat roles, reaffirming how combat is perceived as masculine. Furthermore, most women were shamed after their militancy, confirming the narratives used to depoliticize. Society thus acknowledged those women, but only temporarily and out of need.

**Training and Fighting**

Harsh military training conditioned women’s recruitment: “around 3000 women had received military training during the war, and 250 to 300 of them have actively taken part in the fighting” (Karame, 1996, p.379). All interviewees had undertaken some training, whether for combat or other roles. Respondents claim that military training allowed them to gain a newfound sense of empowerment: “We first challenged ourselves, and competed against [men] to impose our presence and show them girls can do anything” (Respondent 8). However, Shehade (1999) contends that a toxic pressure to conform led many women to suffer from injuries in silence, rather than be alienated. Nevertheless, the training represented progress, as there were no women in the Lebanese Army at the time.

Exploring internal gender dynamics of militias, I inquired respondents about discrimination. Interestingly, all claimed that respect prevailed. Shehade (1999) stresses that solidarity overcame harassment due to the important cause, extensive family networks, and the traditional “protector” status of men. An anecdote told by respondent 8 illustrates this point: in 1976, an all-female Kataeb unit was stationed in Downtown Beirut. Against the leadership’s decision, they occupied a strategic building on the front, with men stationed behind. The men were angered as women were now protecting them, but fled during the ensuing battle. The all-female unit won this memorable battle, and was hailed those women as heroes by the same men, underlying society’s willingness to accept women fighters, although out of need. Regardless, those women’s political motives and agency should not be overlooked.

As discussed in the literature, all interviewees were attributed support tasks and a minority actually engaged in combat: “I started with the communications unit because this was the domain of girls” (Respondent 2). However, they transgressed “feminine” roles, or combined “masculine” activities with carework. Moreover, militant women followed certain behavioral patterns. First, they adopted a defensive style of fighting, focusing on “reclaim” rather than “conquest”: “I was defending my village, my country and my cause” (Respondent 1). This stance becomes problematic when linked to femininity, which some respondents tend to do: “We are less violent” (Respondent 4). In fact, some men might have also been defensive, and it is necessary to stop socializing girls as inherently peaceful. Second, it is argued that women humanized the resistance, reminding boys of home. Accordingly, cleanliness was important, and militant women sometimes provided men with home-cooked meals. This may have prevented more atrocious acts, but perpetuates essentialist conceptions of women’s peacefulness, and should be treated carefully. Nevertheless, I maintain that the simple fact that women were able to access militias is a significant breakthrough. It allowed Lebanese women to be perceived differently and gave them a sense of confidence. Although conflict is not the best arena to advance women’s status, entering a traditionally masculine sphere breaks substantial boundaries.

**The Christian Militiaman**

To uncover the characteristics of the Christian militiaman during the Lebanese civil war, I combine hegemonic masculinity and military masculinity. I study the hegemonic military masculinity within Christian militias during the period of the war: namely, the features militiamen had to embody to be considered decent militants.

As typical in militaries, Christian militiamen had to demonstrate strength, heroism and competitiveness (Hopton, 2003; Kovitz, 2003; Sjoberg, 2014). However, what is specific to the LF and

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7 *Nizamiyyat* literally means “Regulars” or “regular soldiers” and refers to those women who were recruited and trained to fight with and support the Kataeb and/or the LF. *Nizamiyyat* is in the feminine plural form.
Kataeb is the way hegemonic military masculinity entailed respect and honor, particularly regarding women comrades. This was justified on the basis of extensive family ties that predominated in militias. Consequently, the “honorable Christian militiaman” was expected to respect his fellow comrades, but even more so women soldiers. Respondent 8 states that the reason she never faced discrimination was because as soldiers, men had to respect women. Women themselves expressed great respect to all comrades, exemplifying this characteristic of the Lebanese Christian militant.

Furthermore, Christian militiamen were expected to express no fear. Accordingly, almost every interviewee emphasized how she never experienced fear: “I am not afraid of war, nor of death, I never felt this fear” (Respondent 1). Some linked this to being “like men”: “We surpassed this fear [...] we almost became more man than woman” (Respondent 2). In a fascinating argument, one woman explained how she was afraid during combat, but due to her victories, completely forgot this fear, until she started feeling “like a woman” again. This discourse associates fear with femininity in the same essentialist manner that hegemonic military masculinity demands of men to be fearless. Nonetheless, the accomplishments and agency exercised by those women cannot be overlooked.

A third trait of hegemonic military masculinity within Christian militias is uniformity. Militants were expected to wear a uniform, a great source of pride for the women I interviewed. If they ever sought to be considered good soldiers, women had to comply with ideals of hegemonic military masculinity, by cutting their hair and avoiding makeup: “I wore things that weren’t feminine [...] because I wanted everybody to consider me a soldier” (Respondent 7). Although this could be considered a transgression of social expectations, it also represents the way armed groups restrict behavior and make hegemonic military masculinity the right and superior thing to be, while subordinating femininity and alternative masculinities. Tasker (2002) touches on female military masculinity and claims that by embodying it, women transgress social norms while reproducing military norms. Lebanese Christian militant women embodied a type of female military masculinity, by breaking social expectations, but by also complying with hegemonic military masculinity of their environment. They transgressed social roles, but within limits, by embodying a toxic masculinity, but also due to limitations imposed by society: “[My husband’s] 8 experiences are stronger than mine, because he’s a man” (Respondent 10).

Women in Postwar Lebanon

Women’s violence is often depoliticized. The boundaries they break are overlooked, and their involvement in war is even more condemned than men’s (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2015). For Lebanese women, postwar reintegration proved difficult due to stigmatization, associated with their involvement as women. It is important to mention that after the release of its leader from prison9 in 2005, the LF gained popularity as a political party among the Christian community. Nevertheless, respondent 3, for example, continues to conceal her war activities from current colleagues and friends. She simply states it would not be “beneficial to the causes [she] continue[s] to advocate”. Respondent 8 explained how she longed for militant life: “How could I go back to a life that didn’t exist anymore?”

Furthermore, most respondents detailed their postwar activities as concerning political or social initiatives. Some continued their higher education, while others entered the workplace or continue to be politically active today. Militant women’s perceptions of women’s status in Lebanon parallel Baaz and Stern’s (2012) analysis of Congolese women’s self-perception, which shows a strong sense of agency, but nevertheless perpetuates mainstream discourses. All respondents demonstrated a sense of agency, but their impression of women’s status does, sometimes, perpetuate the reality of Lebanese patriarchal norms. Some justified how becoming housewives represents them as being “normal women” again. Interestingly, the same respondent discusses surpassing boundaries, by being elected head of her village’s municipality, breaking with patriarchal traditions.

Other respondents proved more optimistic concerning Lebanese women today: “The fact remains, however, that our role has broken the gender ceiling and furthered women’s rights towards a more equitable [society]” (Respondent 3). Consequently, militant women may have created opportunities for women in Lebanon. Those women’s actions are allowing Lebanese women to no longer be confined to the private sphere, to be perceived differently by society, and has created a major momentum.

8 Respondent 10’s husband was present during the interview. He was a militant in the same militia during the war.
9 Geagea was incarcerated for eleven years (1994-2005) on charges based on his wartime activities, namely, political assassinations and undermining the government’s sovereignty by leading an armed militia.
Building on Shehade’s (1999) observations, I argue that those women embodied important roles in their militias, albeit limited and out of need. Nevertheless, I suggest that women’s successful entry into a masculine sphere is in itself a step forward. The fact that society was able to accept such transgressive roles reflects an opportunity for greater approval of women who break with traditional roles – showcased through growth in women’s economic empowerment after the war (Karame, 1996; Shehade, 1999). However, limits to those advancements cannot be overlooked. Those women fail to be mentioned in accounts of the Lebanese civil war, and although a number of them are politically active, Lebanese women are still widely underrepresented in Lebanese politics.

VI. Conclusion

The research answers to the depoliticization of women’s violence, and the way historical and other accounts of the civil war continues to neglect women and their involvement. It explores the ‘masculine’ roles embodied by Lebanese Christian women and the consequences of their actions on Lebanese women more generally.

First, Lebanese Christian women were involved in the militias out of need, since their community was facing an existential threat. However, they successfully entered a male sphere, at a time where women were traditionally confined to the private realm. Second, all militants undertook military training, giving women a sense of agency and empowerment. Although they were mostly attributed support tasks, they nonetheless broke boundaries and stereotypes. Third, hegemonic military masculine features were embodied by all militants for them to be considered good soldiers. They proved to have negative consequences and their toxicity prevailed. Nevertheless, it allowed women militants to transgress traditional social norms. Finally, those women’s backgrounds were varied at the beginning of the war, and their situations are varied today. They faced difficult reintegration, but the respect they have earned by society illustrates how their transgressions opened important doors for the advancement of women’s status in Lebanon. Although challenges are still ahead, their actions allowed Lebanese society to perceive women differently, and created possibilities for Lebanese women to occupy various new roles.

The question that remains is how a better momentum for the advancement of women’s status can be created in Lebanon, outside the context of war. It is pressing to ask how to encourage women’s advancement and gender equality further, in a country that currently faces political and economic stalemates, environmental crises, and that is surrounded by instability, terrorism and conflict.

References


How can I improve my practice?

A journey into my personal and professional growth as a development worker engaged with gender inequalities in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This paper focuses on my encounter with some Ethiopian female students whose common denominators are poverty, discrimination, violence, inequality but also resilience, hope, courage and dignity. This narrative describes how a group of young students believe education has enriched their lives in a country still dominated by a patriarchy, with an adolescent birth rate of 58.4% (births per 1000 women aged 15-19) and a gender development index of 0.842 [1]. I will draw insights from my practical experience as a development professional who works in Ethiopia with the aim of contributing to the establishment of the human capabilities of these young women. They aspire to a dignified life and believe education to be the sole instrument with which they can free themselves from the subordinated position society attributes to them. As a living-theory researcher [2] who neither separates herself and her practical experience from the social formation she is part of, nor from those aspects of life she is interested in researching, I will explain (my living-educational-theory) my educational influences in my own learning while working with Ethiopian girls and women, in the learning of the people I worked for and in the learning of the social formations that influence my practice and understandings as a development professional. I will show how my work in Ethiopia (2005-to date) is enriched and underpinned by Living Educational Theory methodology that helps me to understand more fully the motivating power of love, faith and action I incorporate within my practice, and how I originated the notion of generativity in a living-theory of sustainable development. As a female development professional and researcher, I also write about the recognition of the significance of gender, professionally, personally and interpersonally. The narrative provides the reader with a journey into my own development, unveiling my living values and living standards of judgment [3] while attempting to be a ‘good’ development professional aspiring towards a ‘good’ change [4] and dealing with gender inequalities. The core of my writings focuses not only on my influence as a development professional in the learning and development of young Ethiopian women, but more interestingly on the influence those women have had on my practice and how they have shaped my view of development, sustainability, and gender. I end this paper with an appreciation of the process that may lead me eventually to answer the key question for a living-theory researcher, namely: ‘How can I improve my practice’.
My first encounter with Ethiopia

Love enables justice to see rightly [5]

I am a development economist and practitioner who works in developing countries promoting sustainable development from the perspective of those at the receiving end of aid. I’m also a researcher and my research is based on a methodology called Living Theory Research (LT) that drives my own development, strengthens my capabilities and my ability to contribute to the establishment of the human capabilities of the people I work with in development countries.

I started my profession in 2005 in Ethiopia. That experience represented my first time outside the western world and certainly outside my personal comfort zone. I did not quite know what to expect from a country that according to the World Economic Forum is deemed to be one of the poorest in the world [6].

Living and working in Ethiopia forged irreversibly my character, my professional views on poverty, on the international development sector, on gender issues and human rights. It also changed my life in very unexpected ways. This narrative is a glimpse into the changes that affected the lives of the Ethiopian girls and women I work with, and also into mine.

I shall commence by clarifying the values I held and I want to live by. Those are love, faith, empathy, justice, dignity and gender equality. I perceive the development work I carry out as an act of love and faith [2]. By faith and love I mean faith in and love for humanity. In my practical experience, I have learned that development work takes patience, humbleness, courage (especially the courage to fail) and above all a profound faith in humanity. Moreover, the people I work with have to have faith in me and believe that I value their lives enormously, see their unique human capabilities and want nothing more than being part of the process that might drive a positive change in their existence.

I concur with Fromm [7] when he defines love as a way to solve the problem of existence, and as ‘a union under the condition to preserve each other’s integrity, one’s individuality’.

My choice to become a development professional has to do with my personal story, which convinced me to commit to support underprivileged people (in particular to girls and women) in overcoming their daily struggle for survival and regain their dignity. My professional goal is to sustain them in acquiring the capacities to stand up for their just and equal opportunities.

As a human rights defender, I understand love and respect for humanity as conducive to justice. There is a relation between love and justice in resolving conflicts of rights [5] in fact love enables justice to see rightly [5]. Justice is both the path I’m on and the destination I want to reach in my life. So I often wondered what justice means to me and to the girls and women I work with in Ethiopia and how do we achieve it? This narrative offers the reader an example on how with some other development professionals we designed and ran a project aimed at providing some young Ethiopian women the right to educate themselves, a way out of poverty and eventually the right to a dignified and more just existence.

Nove Onlus in Ethiopia

What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived.

It is what difference we have made to the lives of others

that will determine the significance of the life we lead. [8]
With the above-mentioned values in mind and with almost ten years of experience in Ethiopia working with destitute people, especially girls and women, in 2012 I set-up a small charity with some trustworthy friends and colleagues with whom I share the wish to contribute to make a difference in the lives of others.

We called the charity Nove Onlus and it focuses on humanitarian assistance, education and socio-economic development. It supports vulnerable people, particularly women, children and disabled persons. These were the premises on which the project called ‘I do not have leprosy’ saw the light in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The aim of the project was and still is to open a small opening through which six young women from the leper-community in Addis Ababa will be able to enter into the Ethiopian society and have the same opportunities as others. These women live in the ‘ghetto’ known for hosting the country’s biggest leper-community. Its inhabitants, even un-contagious, are discriminated against and excluded from the socio-economic life of the country. They are forced not to leave the ‘ghetto’, where there are only a few kindergarten schools, and severe lack of job opportunities. As a consequence, many people including children spend their lives begging on the street. In the ‘ghetto’ there is only profound misery. Those who are more affected by the situation and bear the stigma that isolates them from the rest of the community, always seemed to be girls and women. The project’s team believes in the power of education and in the empowering and freeing force education brings about especially for women in developing countries. The Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai’s words encapsulate my feeling about education:

"Education is one of the blessings of life and one of its necessities [...] education went from being a right to being a crime. I had two options: one is to remain silent and wait to be killed and the second was to speak up and then be killed. I chose the second one." [9]

Hence, we decided to make possible for some young students living in the ‘ghetto’ to keep educating themselves by accessing higher education.

Kure, Banchu, Alex, Tseghe, Mercy and Fere are brave and committed girls, who have struggled to get out of the ‘ghetto’, hidden their background for years and managed go to school. Also for them education was not a right, hence they had to fight for it. As mentioned, people living in the ‘ghetto’, are not supposed to leave it by any means and when caught doing so risk violent aggression that endangers their lives. Eventually these girls have been awarded their high-school diploma with honors, earning the right to attend the public university. However, this feels like a cruel paradox to me, because although they had been granted the right to pursue higher education these young women are so poor that they were not able to accept the offer of the Government, which pays only for the fees. They even lack the money to travel to the campus, feeding themselves, buying a blanket or a piece of soap. Many young women end up prostituting themselves in order to earn what they need to start university. Many more continue to prostitute themselves during their university years in order to survive.

Often the condition of extreme poverty women live in deprives them of their dignity. In fact, all people are born worthy but at the same time, are vulnerable to having their dignity and worth violated [10]. There is a sense in which I am beginning to equate the process of helping others to dignify themselves and doing it for myself, with the processes leading to empowerment. The following interviews with some of the students that Nove Onlus supports might shed light on the meaning of woman empowerment and its connection to education.

1 In order to protect the identity of those part of the project and of the leprosy-affected community I avoid mentioning the real name of the ‘ghetto’

2 I’m using pseudonym to protect the students’ identity.

3 The Government displaced the students, sending them to universities located far away from their city of origin. Students in order to attend the university have to leave their houses and families for years. The Government chooses the faculty the students are going to attend.
Mercy is currently 22 years old and has been raised by a single-mother who is mentally ill. She was conceived as a result of a rape. She’s been the carer of her mother for as long as she can remember. For both Mercy and her mother life has always been characterised by extreme poverty, vulnerability and a sense of helplessness as she tells me during our conversation. She has always been a bright student and the Government granted her permission to attend University. In 2015 Mercy sent the following letter to the team of Nove Onlus:

Dear Friends of Nove ONLUS,

How are you? Thanks to God I am doing well. I always thank God that He gave you to me. By your support and God help, I am in good situation.

You know, hopefully, I will graduate in Marketing Management. This is will be big success for me. In the future I have big plan to work in this profession. [...] You taught me how to help people and to show them love. [...] I know this letter would not explain all my thankfulness, but you will always be in my heart because of your great support, and for this I always thank God and pray for you to have a blessing and wonderful time.

God be always with you!

Yours Mercy [11]

In 2017 during my visit to Ethiopia I met Mercy and followed up on her progress. Below there is a part of our conversation:

I graduated from Bahardar University in Marketing and Management.

I’m so happy that I completed my education and grateful to Nove Onlus for its support without which I could not have completed my bachelor, which changed my life. I found a good job at the Commercial Bank in Addis Ababa where I work as a marketer in the department of e-payment. I really enjoy my work there. I’m still a member of charity club in the university which mandate is to help street children. Our motto is ‘keep hope alive’. [...] I’ve been helped to go to school and finish University and now I want to help other children.

I’ve been helped the way I help them now. Everybody has the responsibility to help other people.’

Now that I’m educated I feel safe, it’s a way out and I feel stronger. I have overcome a lot of challenges, and finally I made it and completed my studies. [12]

I asked her what is empowerment in her eyes and she responded:

It means to make a women strong, and change her life. I can do what’s right for me and what’s good for others. [12]

Alex who was born and still lives in the ‘ghetto’, is now 20 years old. The following is part of our conversation in July 2017:
I study pharmacy (currently 3rd year). In 2 years, I’ll be done with my bachelor degree. I learn how to create new medicines and I enjoy it. I want to help my country and my people. I want to work in a hospital in Addis Ababa. I want to become a doctor and gain a master’s degree.

I have 2 sisters and 2 brothers (twins), my mom is divorced and my family’s financial condition is very bad. We all work and study. During the summer, the Sisters provide me with a job, I clean and cook and do whatever I can to help my family.

Life in campus is very difficult, the food is horrible, and I very often fall sick. Lately I had typhus due also to the appalling hygiene condition. Thanks to the money I receive from Nove Onlus not only I can study but I can buy some food and the medicine I needed to recover from typhus. I also bought my books, and I could pay the bus to travel back home twice a year.

We then talked about education and the following is what she says on the matter:

Education is the source of life, the source of a beautiful life. The world needs educated people.

I’m more confident now due to my education, I feel lucky because I can educate myself.

You [she refers to Nove Onlus] have helped me so much. Sister Angela is hiring me during the summer and I’m so happy that she offered me a job, I’m so happy I can work. I’m never tired to work.

In 2015 Banchu wrote about her story:

I live in the ‘ghetto’ with my mother (leprosy-affected and blind) and my younger siblings. I’m overwhelmed by the many memories of my childhood. I see myself again when I was a child with my mom and my younger brother and sister begging on the street in front of the Sisters’ mission. It was so cold out there. Our hearts were beating faster when we would see the Sisters, as we knew that although they had no money in their pockets, they would greet us, smile at us or caress our cheeks. Sister Angela enrolled me and my siblings in their kindergarten when I was four. They gave me a clean school uniform (I was not wet and dirty anymore!) and a war sweater. I liked the school because it was made out of bricks. Our house instead used to be a small latrine which we re-adapted and used as habitation. My teacher loved me because I loved to study and I was committed to it. My mom worked so much and attended the Sisters’ microcredit program. She managed to have enough money to rent a small but real house for us, so that we don’t have to live in a latrine anymore. My mom although poor, leprosy affected and blind taught us good manners, to be tidy and clean. I always helped her to see through my eyes.

Banchu is now 23 years old and in 2017 during our face-to-face conversation she told me the following:

I’m now 23-year-old and thank to Nove Onlus I have a diploma of accounting from the National College of Addis Ababa. Now I’m studying for my degree (1st year) which I will complete in 3 more years. Thanks to my diploma I started working at a radio station called Fana. I work during the day and study in the evenings. I want to do a master’s degrees in accounting. I want to serve my society and my people and provide them

4 I refer to the ‘Sisters’ to describe a group of Catholic nuns very well known in the neighbourhood of the ‘ghetto’ for the help they provide to destitute people. Nove Onlus and the Sisters collaborate very often in running projects in Addis Ababa. The focal person in the mission is Sister Angela. In order to protect the identity and the work of those nuns and the people they assist I use pseudonyms and avoid mentioning the name of the congregation.
with a quality service whenever they’ll come to my office. I’d like to help other colleagues improving their knowledge and learn from my experience.

Other people helped me in the past like Nove Onlus and the Sisters, hence I want to help my colleagues improving their lives the way I was helped improving my life.

I feel empowerment now, which means that I can do it, and that I can change my life. This feeling gives me confidence. My sister is now 16-year-old and I want to help her to study at university. [15]

What comes next?

I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come.

But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended. [16]

Many years of work in developing countries and in particular 13 years of engagement in Ethiopia have formed my opinion on development and the meaning of sustainability beyond the jargon adopted by international discourses. My vision of development and sustainability is not fixed, it’s ‘living’ instead as my meanings are enriched by professional and personal experience and moulded around my values and living standards of judgment [3].

I concur with Maathai [17], who argues that development does not only entail the acquisition of material goods [...] instead it is a means of achieving a quality of life that is sustainable, and of allowing the expression of the full range of creativity and humanity [17].

Sustainable development is envisaged as a time when people are capable of contributing to the building of a society in which inclusion, gender-equality, cultural cohesion, equity, educational development, respect for diversities and the natural environment are recognized as fundamental values [18]. Hence the aim of development interventions in practice is in my eyes that of tackling the holistic development of the people I work with (i.e. emotional, psychological, spiritual, economic), and at the same time to tackle my growth as a professional and human being bearing in mind the question: how do I improve my practice?

Maathai continues her argument on the challenges that hinder the development of Africa by describing the perfect equilibrium the continent should work towards (and I add any other place in the world) as a three-legged traditional African stool. The first leg represents democratic space where rights are respected; the second leg is the sustainable and accountable management of natural resources and the final one stands for the cultures of peace, namely fairness, respect, compassion, forgiveness, recompense and justice [17]. Issues, she argues must be addressed simultaneously just as the African stool is made out of a single block of wood and each element exists and is well functioning only in conjunction with others.

According to art 26. of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) everyone has the right to education [...] and shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms [19]. However, reality is far from this. At the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Graduation Ceremonies 2017 Machel focused her
speech on the urgency to end gender inequity by addressing what she calls an ‘assault on the freedom to learn and to access education’ [20]. She added:

Research has shown that the education of girls can help break the cycle of poverty, boost the economy and improve health and affirms the human rights and dignity of women. The cost of gender inequality is great. We know that we cannot stop the cycle of poverty, economic deprivation and poor health unless everyone has an equal opportunity to access education. [20]

With all the above in mind and my professional and personal experience shaping around the lives of the girls and women I attempt to support in their daily struggle for re-gaining their rights to education and to a dignified life I wonder what comes next.

Paraphrasing Mandela, after overcoming a great challenge we shall prepare ourselves in overcoming the next great challenge. Notwithstanding the life-changing achievements by Alex, Mercy, Banchu and their colleagues whose efforts led them to enjoy a dignified life and to a full(er) development of their human personality [19], I ask myself what’s my role as development practitioner and human rights activist who feels so deeply for gender equality in the world. I believe that the girls’ academic accomplishment was not my ultimate goal in the first place. I’ll attempt to gain some clues while I also clarify what aim do I set to myself personally and professionally.

The following story shall demonstrate that my approach to sustainable development allows generative development to flourish [2]. By that I mean that sustainability evolves into a self-perpetuating force that can make greatest contribution to human capabilities [2]. Volckmann [21] argues that generativity involves supporting the thriving of present and future generations.

Good days will come

If I can help one person and
that person can help another person
then it becomes a change. [22]

Rahma is 41 years old, mother of three daughters: Semira (25-year-old), Salwa (21-year-old) and Fozjia (19-year-old). The family is of Eritrean origin, but Rahma and her daughters have been living in Addis Ababa for the past 20 years. Their lives have been hit irredeemably by the Eritrean-Ethiopian war (1998-2000). Rahma’s husband Ismail and father of her daughters had been deported to Eritrea where he died during the war. Rahma suddenly found herself alone in Addis Ababa, completely isolated from the community (people of Eritrean origin where discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity) with three young children and no source of income. The family was disenfranchised, thus exposed to any sorts of danger and abuses. For years they suffered from severe hunger; diseases; very often lack of water and no access to potable water; lack of hygiene, lack of a proper shelter; harassed by the community and ostracized since Rahma’s disease was mistakenly considered to be HIV. In other words they lived without many human rights. I met Rahma and the family in 2005 and since then we’ve been very close.

In June 2017 during our latest conversation in Addis Ababa, Rahma talks about her eldest daughter Semira graduating from university and what that means to her as a woman and as a mother.

I was born in Eritrea in the countryside and I’m not educated. When I was young I did not want to give birth given the situation for girls in my country. I didn’t want my kids to grow up in the situation I grew up in. [23]
As a LT researcher, I use multi-media approaches, such as a video camera to record conversations, when I’m allowed to do so. I find this method particularly useful in analyzing the body language of the interviewees when in the same space with me. I like to capture the flow of life-affirming energy [24], and those imperceptible physical language reactions impossible to reproduce in written language. In fact the significance of multi-media narratives is that they compensate for some of the limitations in our binocular vision into our relationally dynamic awareness of the movement of bodies in space and boundaries; in other words, our proprioception [24].

I also wish people to tell their own story, which in my view is as a contribution to the process of dignifying themselves by speaking with their own voice.

We ridiculed representation and said it was finished, but we failed to draw the consequences of this "theoretical" conversion - to appreciate the theoretical fact that only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf. [25]

In the following video Rahma (wearing a traditional dress), Salwa (translating from Amharic to English) and Fozjia (on my right-hand side) discuss about life and education.

Rahma speaks about education as something that no one can take away from you. She then defines her life and those of her daughters as incomparable (from minutes 1:11 to 1:46 and from 3:08 to 4:07 in English)

Video 1. [Rahma talking with Arianna Briganti and her daughters on education](26)

When she was young she was deprived of the right to go to school (she can only write her name) whilst her daughters are pursuing their higher education (Semira graduated in July 2017, Salwa is attending 2nd year of university, and Fozjia will complete high school in 2018).

Later in the conversation from minutes 4:22 to 4:56 Salwa recalls their very difficult past and despite the sheer poverty in their younger-selves when they showed an incredible resilience. Salwa adds that her strengths and motivation to go to school came from the conviction that, as she puts it, good days will come. From minutes 4:58 onwards Fozjia with her usual entertaining and joyful spirit recalls when she was attending the Sister’s kindergarten, but used to cry a lot since she did not want to go, instead she was only keen to play. Fozjia’s ability to laugh and make us laugh even in the most appalling and difficult situations has always impressed me. Even when life was so tough on them, she was always been the one who, with her contagious laughter, sense of humor and optimism, would remind her family (and myself)
not to allow anything to deprive them of the little joys of life and from enjoying themselves. I find her ability to have faith in the future and look always at the bright side of life very healthy and extremely dignifying. She and her family where living for many years on less than 1 USD per day (according to the World Bank estimate in 2013, 10.7 percent of the world's population lived on less than US$1.90 a day) [27]. However, Fozjia and her family never inspired pity in me, on the contrary they embody the dignified image of African children one not of malnutrition, but of health, not of child soldiers or street children addicted to drugs, but hardworking students and intact families [17].

The following video shows my conversation with Semira, Rahma’s eldest daughter who at the time of talking just competed her bachelor’s degree in Business Management.

Semira at the age of twelve had to take charge of the entire household. She had to leave the school and struggled to feed her family members and herself. Out of despair Semira decided to leave Ethiopia and look elsewhere for a better life and more income for her family. Some human traffickers intent on recruiting young Ethiopian women had duped Semira into believing that a brighter future awaited her in Saudi Arabia. She left her mother’s home without a trace and started working as a housemaid for a local family in order to earn the money asked by the traffickers for sorting out all the paperwork to travel to Saudi Arabia. Thirteen years later Semira talks about that period of her life with me.

From minutes 1:52 -5:41 Semira recalls her painful past and the sense of helplessness she felt whilst thinking that no one would help her family. From 6:23 onwards she provides a powerful insight on how education changed her life. Through education she freed herself which makes her independent from marital support.

While talking about all those girls who are not going to school, Semira says:

*I can convince them to go to school, being free from others, then they will do the same and we can change our world* (from minutes 9:17 to 10:03)

Semira and all the other young women present in this paper manifest the self-perpetrating energy I call generativity which nurtures the blossoming of the next generation [2]. This is how long-lasting changes occur and bind my empowerment with another person’s empowerment.

In essence, generativity is the act of preparing another’s garden for spring. It’s power in the service of love. It’s an act of giving that enables another person to manifest his or her own
strengths and gifts through love... Generativity protects our mental and physical health across an entire lifespan. When we nurture others, we nurture ourselves. [29]

All these are fundamental for my enquiry about the validity of my work as a development professional. My ultimate goal transcends the girls’ academic accomplishment and is twofold: firstly it is about emancipation, empowerment, self-confidence and self-determination, autonomy, dignity and social justice. Secondly, it is about planting seeds of generativity that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity [30].

**How do I improve my practice?**

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—*

*I took the one less travelled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.* [31]

As an LT researcher I always wonder whether I am improving my practice.

As a manager of development interventions in developing countries (and a very inquisitive person) I am always keen to keep educating myself, hence my interest in acquiring those skills in the field of management and international development that will strengthen my business profile and make me a valid candidate for various business positions.

As a LT researcher and field worker I treasure the lessons I learn from the direct contact with the many people I work with in developing countries. My practical experience and my reflexive self show me that I need to understand better the similarities between me and the girls and women and I help if I really want to improve my practice and transcend the shortfall of development intervention.

While aid can be a very useful tool for development, it also may be achieving a complete opposite outcome, undermining its stated objectives and leaving a majority of Africans dependent rather than empowered. […] The international community often expects fact returns from its development investments, but the problem of underdevelopment, marginalization, lack of self-esteem, fear and cynicism didn’t afflict Africa’s people yesterday—indeed they have accumulated over centuries. [17]

I also echo Maathai when she says that ‘sometimes when we do our work in high-level meetings, we are not making changes where they really matter’ [17].

As a LT researcher I am researching my own practice as a development worker to generate and share educational knowledge that can be of use to others in generative sustainable development to enhance the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity [30].

These are the reasons why I decided to engage in a very disciplined and deep analysis of my personal and professional story in generating my living-educational-theory with my values and where they come from as my explanatory principles. I found out that there are aspects of my younger self that are more similar to the women I work with that I could have guessed.
Until we actually sit down and look at what the mind is doing, [and see] the nature of awareness. . . there is really no motivation to wake up, which is precisely why most people in the world are just going through their lives; and waking up is not a high priority; because they haven’t seen what their minds are doing, what their minds are up to. [32]

By pursuing the nature of my awareness [32] I have recently recognized aspects of my young self which brought me back many years to when I was in a subordinated and disempowered position, and made me feel a vulnerable and helpless little girl. It’s the first time that I’ve seen how similar I am to some of the women I have worked with regardless of my privileged education and western upbringing. It is also my first time to recognize that some of those women’s common denominators, such as discrimination, violence and inequality have also been mine. I wonder if I was thinking that I was immune or in denial as my own biases make me associate (mistakenly) gender discrimination with less developed countries more. It seems I did. I also admit that the woman I become, struggles both cognitively and emotionally to accept that features of vulnerability and helplessness I see in other women’s eyes as similar to what used to be my own.

Insight is really a function of an intuitive new way of seeing a situation or experience. Insight isn’t about creating some mental state or changing what’s actually going on, but . . . suddenly, Aha! [we] see something differently. The situation doesn’t change, but our perspective on it can change because we see it in a different way. [33]

I therefore also recognize that I used their same ‘weapons’ to fight back against patriarchy and the lack of choices that refrained me from exploring my own potential as a human being and as a woman. Acquiring the freedom to choose was part of the process I adopted to dignify myself and become the changes I wish to see in the world 5 [34]. Those ‘weapons’ are resilience, hope, courage and love. These are the ‘skills’ that I need the most in my personal and professional life. These are the ‘skills’ I know I want to pass on to all those girls and women that feel discriminated against in terms of their gender, disempowered and helpless. This is the path I walk along to improve my practice, both in my work as a generative development worker and as a researcher who is contributing to knowledge of her field as she explores the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’

Conclusion

Let us truly see those about whom we speak [35]

In this presentation, I have explored some of the implications of asking, researching and answering my question ‘How can I improve my practice?’ [30]. I have presented a journey into my personal and professional growth as a development worker engaged with gender inequalities in Ethiopia. The self-reflexive journey includes the generation of my living-educational-theory as I focus on improving my

5 This frequently used quotation is attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, but it cannot be traced back to a definite year or publication
practice as well as the professional and academic knowledge-base of development work. I explained how as a development professional I envisage development work as a means for empowering underprivileged people and move towards a sustainable and generative development.

The evidence I use to justify my claims to know, includes digital multi-media data within my narrative. By showing myself in conversation with Ethiopian young women I am seeking to show and clarify the meanings of the embodied values I use in explaining my educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence my practice and understandings.

This process has helped me to ‘see’ myself in relation to the people I work with, consequently ‘seeing’ them more clearly and connecting more deeply with their lives, expectations, vulnerabilities and humanity.

References


[34] M. Gandhi.

Collision of Diversity and Finance in Business

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Currently, I’m focused on the professional experiences of women and gender nonconforming folks and their advancement throughout their careers. I am currently considering a three-step plan to more effectively diversify our businesses:

1) Make it clear to companies that their business bottoms lines will suffer without a more diverse workforce
2) Decrease our reliance upon diversity and inclusion trainings to attempt create safe and welcoming workplaces and
3) Retain and promote diverse, internal talent by giving females employees access to financial training AND transparent business goals.

A Harvard Business School Press study stated that in 2001, women claimed only about 20% of the corporate executive job openings in the United States. There was only one female CEO of a Fortune 1000 company, Andrea Jung, of Avon. For you math majors out there, that’s 0.1%.

By 2014, there had been some improvement. The number of female CEOs at Fortune 1000 companies had risen about 8% to 84 women. Additionally, between 2001 and 2014, the number of women in managerial and professional positions had risen to 51%. I want to note that only 12% of women in those roles were women of color, so clearly racial inclusivity is still lagging. However, in my time today, I will be reflecting mostly on my own experience, and therefore focusing on gender diversity than racial diversity.

Researchers have spent time recently studying the effect that diversity has on the profitability and/or the lifespan of companies. In corporate executive interviews, researchers found that “relatively few executives cited a moral justification for diversity, while all cited the business case”. By highlighting a financial need for diversity, we compel big businesses who consistently need to answer questions about their bottom line to pay attention. There are significant monetary gains to be had with a diverse work population. In a 2015 McKinsey report, researchers found that “companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians”, which means that gender-diverse companies are more likely to outperform their competitors. Additionally, the report states that “companies in the bottom quartile for gender are statistically less likely to achieve above-average financial returns”. Meaning that bottom-quartile companies are lagging rather than merely not leading.

And the initial positive implications of diversity in business compound when considering additional effects. A more diverse workforce means having the ability to attract and retain the best and the brightest from a larger pool of candidates. A more diverse workforce leads to a wider
understanding of your marketplace, different ways of problem-solving, and, as a result, greater opportunities for growth.

My former employer, General Assembly, has a new senior advisor, Deb Henretta. Henretta is the former Global President of Procter & Gamble (P&G) and was able to offer extremely profitable advice to P&G’s diaper division when the company saw that they were consistently losing market share in that area. The mostly-male diaper researchers and executives at the company were flummoxed. They clearly had the most indestructible, leak-proof diapers on the market but were still losing money. Henretta explained that, as a new mother, she found the diapers to simply be too loud. When she attempted to use her own company’s diapers, they would wake her newborn baby and deprive her of some much needed rest. As a result, P&G changed the material with which they made the diapers and profits increased almost immediately.

After convincing businesses to seek out and hire more diverse talent we can focus on the part that everyone has heard before: creating a more inclusive company culture. We currently spend too much money and resources training our corporate leadership teams in an effort to achieve this goal. For example, in 2015, Google spent over $150 million in diversity initiatives, including anti-bias training for its executives, with little to no effect. In a paper entitled Is the Business Case Enough? the authors explain that “executives appear to have a very limited understanding of the unique experiences of women, and many have had no direct experience working with or supervising women”.

The results were also damaging on the managerial level, where researchers found that the implicit attitudes of supervisors severely inhibited the growth of women within an organization by excluding them from internal networks and not disclosing information about career advancement opportunities. Simply because companies understand that diversity is good for business does not mean that these companies will transform themselves overnight. We need to not only enhance cultural competency but also support and propel women forward in their careers. Imagine if $150 billion were instead put toward career advancement initiatives for women. I hypothesize that with more confident and highly trained women, we will see more women advance to executive teams, and in essence, remove the need for diversity training. This is where I have found the greatest need for improvement. This is the real challenge.

As a queer, gender non-conforming person, I struggled for years to feel empowered at work. I bounced from job to job, sometimes due to a lack of upward mobility but more often due to microaggressions and outright gender discrimination. In 2014, I left my job after being denied a promotion following an internal interview process. I was obviously disappointed but naively assumed there was simply someone more qualified for the position - that I was not good enough. I carried that assumption with me for some time, until my supervisor was inadvertently forwarded an email with this twelve-word explanation: “I’m not comfortable introducing our clients to a woman in a tie.” I am still angry.

I began work at General Assembly several weeks later. My friend who recruited me to work for the organization left two weeks after that, citing a hostile work environment for a queer, gender non-conforming person of color. “Great,” I thought.
Since we worked in different departments, I thought I’d stick it out for a while and see if and how the company was progressing. I noticed moments of microaggressions and an overwhelmingly segregated team. The sales side consisted almost entirely of men and the account management side was almost entirely women. After only four short months with the company, I asked for some time with my team’s General Manager to give feedback regarding the gendered makeup of the team. He was open and receptive, citing the one Women’s Studies class he took in Business school as the reason for his empathy. I seized the opportunity to mention a few of the microaggressions I had noticed among my colleagues. Within weeks, he had scheduled an Impact vs. Intent training for our 30-person team, which brought small improvements. I remained diligent.

On my year anniversary, the company gifted me a jacket. A few months earlier I was told to send my size requirements to HR. A men’s small, for those who are wondering. General Assembly did great work honoring its employees and I was excited to receive my token of appreciation. Unfortunately, on my anniversary I was handed a women’s small and was told, by my HR team, that there would be no exchanges. I explained that I wasn’t really trying to exchange my jacket. I simply wanted the jacket I asked for. Once they understood that I had requested a men’s coat, I was told that they had fixed my mistake for me and ordered me the correct women’s size. Eventually, after some more back and forth, I walked away with the jacket I wanted and a promise to start a company-wide Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Six months later, myself and eleven other committee members began Diversity and Community Workshops for groups within the company, beginning with our leadership team.

I celebrated these advancements and enjoyed my work with the diversity committee. Still, I was conscious of the fact that our efforts toward creating a more inclusive workplace were directed at folks in the majority. We spent most of our energy educating white, cis, men about privilege and what it means to be inclusive. Where was the work being done to bolster my experience and the experience of other professional women?

During this time, I was inspired by the work of Susan Colantuono, the CEO of Leading Women, a consulting firm that supports corporate initiatives to close the leadership gender gap. She once moderated a panel (of five white men) titled “What do you look for in high-potential employees?” The panelists unanimously agreed that understanding the business and exhibiting great financial acumen are incredibly important traits for leaders. Colantuono then turned to the audience of 150 women to ask how many of them had received this particular career advice. Three women raised their hands.

I immediately sought to become more involved with the finance team at my new company. I enrolled in an “Introduction to Financial Accounting” course and attempted to better understand my business’s goals and bottom line. Ten months later, I was promoted to a management role. Eight months after that, I was promoted once more. In order for women to be successful, we need to increase access to both women’s empowerment resources and financial educations.

It is only after we’ve created honest and welcoming workspaces can we ask women to investigate strategies for their own hiring and advancement. We can accelerate change by the
combination of holding our companies accountable and increasing access to financial information and business strategies.

It is when we combine both efforts that we see the most immediate and fruitful change. By combining diversity and inclusivity training with female empowerment and advancement, we see businesses hiring and retaining diverse talent, as well as reaching more diverse customers and increasing profitability.

In conclusion, the way to create the most profitable and inclusive workplaces is by:

1) Emphasizing that non-diverse businesses lose money
2) Decreasing our reliance upon diversity and inclusion trainings, and
3) Increasing efforts to retain and promote diverse, internal talent by giving female employees access to financial training and transparent business goals.
References


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Abstract

While the underrepresentation of women in management positions and the gender pay gap have prevalently been objects of research, life patterns of managers, especially executives at top management level, haven’t been sufficiently investigated until now. The current study of life patterns of female and male executives investigates how top managers and their partner distribute their time and tasks between work and family and explores to what extent patterns become apparent. Target group of the survey were top managers from Germany, Switzerland and Austria with children living in their household. The study analyses how much time top managers spend with their children and verifies the influencing factors on that time spent. For that matter the new construct of the family time gap is being investigated. Also, the study evaluates to what extent managers are content with their work-family setting. The research study provides insights into the life patterns of top executives in German-speaking countries.

1. Introduction

Managers tend to work long hours and being a parent, they have to allocate their time and attention, amongst other life domains, between work and family. The current study examines how top executives with children handle various tasks within work and family life and to what extent patterns are being discovered. Moreover, the study analyses how much time top managers spend with their children and which factors have an influence on that time. In addition, it will be explored, to what extent top managers are contented with their personal situation regarding work and family. (2)

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(2) My special thanks go to my colleague Prof. Dr. Tobias Hagen for the statistical analysis of the data.
2. Theoretical background
Life patterns of managers, especially executives at top management level, haven’t been sufficiently investigated in research up to now. Current studies on the compatibility of family and work, as well as the division of work between couples, show very specific focal points. The topic of compatibility of family and work is a recurring subject of numerous investigations in which potential influence factors are being examined [1].

Clark outlines in her Border-Theory, that the connection between the domain of work and the domain of family, depends on the strength of the borders. Depending on the flexibility and permeability of such borders, a mix of work and family demands arises. The compatibility of the domains will be positively affected by identification of all involved parties and their specific influence[2]. The Spillover-Model provides another approach to explain the relationship between work and family life. Accordingly, a satisfying private life will lead to a satisfying work life and vice versa. Negative reactions like stress in one of the two domains can also affect the other domain negatively. Consequently, both areas of life can mutually influence each other positively or negatively [3].

Examining the sources of work-family conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell distinguish three forms of work-family conflict. The time based conflict implies multiple roles that compete for a person’s time. The work-family conflict is positively correlated with the number of working hours per week. Also, spending a lot of time in family activities can produce work-family conflict. The second form of work-family conflict is the strain-based conflict, where strain in one role affects performance in another role. Any work or family role characteristic that produces strain can add to the work-family conflict. The third form of conflict, the behavior-based conflict, indicates, that if a person is not able to adapt one’s behavior to comply with the expectations of different roles, conflicts between the roles can occur [4]. Major/Lauzun/Jones deal with research studies about coping with this conflict [5]. Studies show, both work and family are of high importance for people in Germany. Working is of importance to parents as well. Work-orientation and family-orientation don’t contradict one another [6]. However, academic investigations on the division of tasks in the domestic environment show a gender-specific distribution within partnerships [7]. Women usually show a larger proportion of time for household and childcare. In addition, the dynamic of a process of traditionalisation in West-Germany has been observed [8]. Thus, as men continuously reduce their contribution to female-typical activities over time, traditional patterns are developed in the course of a partnership.

The present paper deals particularly with top executives with children, and examines how top managers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland currently perceive their compatibility of work and family. Thus, the study deals with the following questions:

- How much time do top managers spend with their children?
- Which factors have an influence on the time top managers spend with their children?
- Which decisions regarding the allocation of time, tasks and responsibilities are made by top managers and their partners?
3. Survey and sample
A standardised survey was chosen as research method. The target group of the survey were executives with children, who belong to the company’s top management, division management or department management. The structured questionnaire covered 33 items. The online survey was conducted from September 4th - October 4th 2015, in conjunction with the executive panel of Odgers & Berndtson, that surveys top managers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland [9]. Out of the 1323 panel participants with children, 177 managers with children participated in the present survey.

According to the sample, the typical executive is male (91%), has two children living in his own household (52%). 96% have a first university degree or a post-graduate degree and work 50-59 hours per week (48%). Moreover, 64% of the respondents are 40-49 years old and 93% are married or live in a relationship, thereof 73% with a working partner. 71% of the participants belong to the executive management (37%) or division management (34%).

4. Empirical Results

Time spent with children on weekdays
42% of the executives indicate that they spend less than 5 hours with their children during the week (Monday till Friday). This would correspond to a daily average of less than one hour. Nearly a half of all executives (47%) indicate that they spend 5-10 hours with their children on weekdays. These and the following outcomes represent the perceptions of the participants.

8% of the respondents state that they spend between more than 10 to 15 hours with their children and 3% more than 15 hours to 20 hours. None of the executives indicates more than 20 hours. A different picture emerges with the mentioned time, the partner spends with children on weekdays. 44% of the partners spend more than 20 hours with their children, 21% between more than 15 to 20 hours. Only 7% of managers’ partners spend less than 5 hours with the children.

Factors influencing the time spent with children
Regression analysis was used to identify variables that might have an influence on the time executives spend with their children on weekdays. Analyses show that the age of executives, their qualification,
current position, number of children, age of the youngest child and the partner’s occupation and qualification have no significant influence on the time the managers spend with their children.

However, gender seems to reveal a significant influence on the time executives spend with their children. Thus, female executives indicated to spend almost 3 hours more with their children on weekdays (Monday to Friday) than male executives with the same characteristics (age, qualification and position) indicated. The estimated effect is significant at the 5% level. However, due to the low representation of female executives several limitations occur.

**In comparison: Time spent with children on the weekend**
Most of the respondents spend more time with their children from Saturday to Sunday than during the weekdays from Monday to Friday.

![Fig. 2: Time spent with children on weekdays (Monday to Friday) versus time on weekend](image)

**Division of responsibilities and the profile of the partner**
93% of the participants are in a relationship (married/ living with their partner in a household), of whom 73% are working (31% full-time, 69% part-time). Overall, less than a quarter of the executives’ partners (24%) work in a full-time job. At the same time, the qualification level of the partners is high. 72% have a university degree or postgraduate degree such as a PhD or MBA. 28% have a vocational education. The division of the responsibilities between the executives and his/her partner regarding personal child care, family organisation, housekeeping, gardening and parenting must be considered against this background.
Attending to personal child care

80% of the executives indicated, that their partner exclusively or predominantly takes over the personal child care. 15% of the participants reported personal child care in equal parts with their partners. 5% of the respondents state that they exclusively or predominantly take over the personal child care.

![Division of personal child care](image)

Fig.3: Division of responsibilities between the executive and the partner: Personal child care

Executives with a partner working in full-time are more likely to take over the personal child care. Thus, 38% of the respondents state that they equally share the care of the children with their partner. 15% claim that they exclusively or predominantly take over personal child care. However, 44% of the executives with a full-time working partner report that personal child care is only or mainly done by the partner.

Division of family organisation

In response to the question "How do you and your partner distribute the responsibilities regarding the organisation of family responsibilities like dates of the children, birthday presents...?" 17% of the managers state that family organisation is shared equally. However, only 4% say that they exclusively or predominantly take over the responsibilities by themselves.

Division of gardening and repairs

Nevertheless, gardening and repair duties are predominantly done by the executives. Thus, 64% of the respondents indicate that they only/ predominantly take over repair and gardening duties. Therefore, a classical role allocation with respect to repairs, gardening and family organisation can be observed. Mostly, the (male) executives are responsible for repairs and gardening, whereas their partner is responsible for family organisation.
Responsibility for Parenting

Conversely, the majority (59%) of managers state that they equally share parenting responsibilities with their partner. 40% claim that their partner is predominantly responsible for parenting, and 1% reveals to be predominantly responsible for parenting.

Contentedness with regards to work and family

Nearly 2/3 (66%) of the executives are satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life balance. Consequently, 34% are less satisfied or dissatisfied. Important factors that are perceived to positively influence the work-life-balance are self-determination of the business schedule and the flexibility of the partner.

![Fig. 4: Factors promoting work-life balance](chart)

Spillover effects between family and work

Most executives experience positive effects between family and work. 73% of the respondents state that "My family life inspires me in my work". Only 19% of the respondents agree with the statement: "Family life impairs my work." However, the effect of work on family results in an ambivalent picture. 46% of the executives experience their work as enriching for their family life. Nevertheless, the majority of executives (76%) agree with the statement: "Work impairs my private life."

Considering contentedness in relation to the position of the executives, data show that at least half of the participants are contented or very contented with their balance between work and family. Noticeably, executives of top management levels (74%) and executives on departmental level (76%) are generally satisfied or very satisfied. However, only 50% of the managers on a divisional management level are satisfied to very satisfied. Contentedness with balance of work and family life varies with the position.
Regression analysis was used to explain contentedness with further variables. As a result, professional position turns out to be the only statistically significant variable. ‘Middle management’ executives (divisional/area management) are significantly less satisfied than executives of the other two levels (top management and department management). No influence on contentedness was obvious for the other variables like qualification, age, gender, company size and number of children.

**Attributions to working mothers**

Within the framework of the survey, the top managers with children were also asked about their perception on the work and attitude of their female subordinates with children. In particular, the impressions on performance, commitment, reliability, resilience, sick days, career ambition and flexibility were enquired. The following question was asked: “Among my female subordinates with children I observe: Performance/commitment/career ambition … of mothers compared to other staff members is higher/ as high/ lower.”

Results show that the performance of mothers is perceived to be as high as the performance of other staff members (72%). Ten percent of the respondents consider the performance of mothers to be even higher. Also, the reliability of mothers (81%), their commitment (79%), resilience (78%) are considered to be at least as high as those of other staff members. However, 46% of the respondents experience that mothers have less career ambition than other staff members. Less flexibility of mothers is perceived by 42% of the respondents and 31% percent indicate more sick days.
5. Summary and conclusions

In sum, the study “Work and family - Life patterns of executives” provides the following findings about top executives with children. Top managers with children and their qualified partner mostly follow traditional patterns. The question of how much time executives spend with their children and how they distribute their time leads to the following outcome. Around half of the executives spend 5-10 hours with their children from Monday till Friday. 2/5 spend even less than 5 hours with their children. However, the managers indicate, that their partners spend comparatively more time with their children. The difference in the amount of time spent with children is referred to as family time gap. Potentially the amount of family-time of the manager and that of the partner is allocated complementary. There is more time for children on weekends when 3/4 of the executives spend more than 10 hours with their children. However, gender seems to reveal a significant influence on the time executives spend with their children. Thus, female executives indicated to spend almost 3 hours more with their children on weekdays than male executives with the same characteristics (age, qualification and position). But the time spent with children is not influenced by other variables such as age of executives, qualification, current position, number of children, age of the youngest child and the partner’s occupation and qualification. The distribution of tasks follows traditional patterns, as the partner predominantly or exclusively takes over the organisation of family and the personal child care. However, repair and gardening is predominantly or exclusively done by the executive. Personal child care is split more egalitarian, if the partner is working full-time. Parenting responsibilities are mostly indicated to be distributed equally. Although the top managers spend less time with the children than their partners, they perceive their influence on parenting as equally strong. Family constellation is characterised by the fact that the partner is usually very qualified and working. Most of them work part-time. Regarding their personal life situation in view of work and family, the majority of top managers with children are contented. They claim the family life is a booster and source of inspiration for work. The impact of work on family life is perceived ambivalently. On the one hand, the majority indicates that work impairs their private life, but also many top managers perceive work to be enriching for the family life. In addition, it was found that personal contentedness depends on the professional position. 50% of the managers on a divisional management level are less contented or discontented with their balance of work and family. This finding gives reason for further analysis of the possible causes. For the other variables like qualification, age, gender, company size and the number of children no influence was found.
Regarding their female subordinates with children, managers in large part perceive the mothers who work for them to have less career ambitions than other staff members. Although the responding managers have both, children and a career, they do not ascribe career ambition to mothers working for them. Mothers are perceived to perform at least as good as other employees, but they are not connoted with career ambition. This could be one of the reasons, why mothers are less considered as candidates for next level positions. The study contributes to obtain insights into the life patterns of top managers in German-speaking countries.


The challenge of integrating gender analysis in gender non-related research: The experience of an interdisciplinary project on multimedia cultural heritage

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I don’t mind losing a debate, I mind the debate not even being raised.
Germaine Greer

1 Introduction

The promotion of gender equality has been at the heart of European social and economic policies since 1957, when the principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome. During the past few decades the status of women in our society has improved significantly. For example, today women are present at every level of the academic hierarchy – although gender gaps still exist and the number of women tends to decrease along the career path, in the so-called leaky pipe [1]. The value of their contribution has been recognised to the point that the absence or the exclusion of women is now regarded as an impoverishment of the research itself. Yet the scenario remains complex and raising concerns around “gender issues” often receives mixed reactions from both men and women in the day-to-day personal and professional life.

Horizon 2020 structurally encourages the inclusion of gender equality in project applications. For projects where it seems completely irrelevant or impossible to relate the research interests to gender, applicants are asked to include a statement justifying the exclusion of gender. Attention to gender can be interpreted as having different levels of impact: (1) gender equality in scientific careers; (2) gender balance in decision making; and (3) integration of the gender dimension into the content of research and innovation. Yet translating these guidelines into a concrete action plan for project applications that deal with gender non-related topics is not easy. How do we make the commitment to gender credible? What activities can actually have an impact on gender research or society at large?

In this article, I present my experience of thinking, structuring and implementing a successful Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship proposal which includes gender mainstreaming in a gender non-related field of research, namely that of multimedia cultural heritage. The project runs for two years (2017-2019) and implements gender aware activities in the research process and in the research content.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 summarises the starting point of my experience; Section 3 presents the main challenges posed by the implementation of gender analysis in gender
non-related research; and Section 4 goes into the details of the steps and actions I took before, during and after the project proposal submission and evaluation.

**2 State of the art**

Including gender at micro and macro level throughout the project cycle has required a systematic reflection and an effort to learn about the methods and the indicators of the gender research field. My case study is relevant in that the reflections I carried out during the preparation of the application touch upon the critical obstacles that normally prevent other researchers from including gender in their work. Despite my efforts to consider the gender dimension at micro and macro level throughout the project cycle, as required by the H2020 calls (see Subsec. 4.1), I have found some resistance in the phase of implementation. One of the crucial problem lies in “arbitrariness” of the gender dimension in gender non-related studies, so I have often been asked: “Couldn’t carry out your research without considering gender?” The correct answer is yes, I could: gender in my research is not the focus, but it is arbitrary in the scene that the well-known 40% quota of female members on public committees and boards proposed at institutional level is arbitrary. It’s like asking General Motors, who has been receiving mediatic attention for their active policy of including women at every level of company hierarchy\(^1\), also partnering with the initiative Gifs Who Code\(^2\): “Couldn’t you put together a board without women?” Of course they could. The point is to give women a chance and facilitate their access to positions that were traditionally filled by men, as the only strategy to divert the inertia of the status quo.

The gender dimension is integrated within Horizon 2020, at two levels: (1) gender balance within the research teams; and (2) gender dimensions within the content of research (source: ESOF Conference, also mentioned in Subsec. 4.2.3). The inclusion of women on committees and boards is comparable to their inclusion in research teams in science. The concept can be extended to other collaborators, mentors, and also subjects involved in the research, unless their gender needs to be determined by the nature of the research. But how to integrate gender in the content of research? Some research may reveal a more meaningful connection, like those explained in the examples provided in the video mentioned in Subsec. 4.2. For other types of research, the connection may seem non existent. In how it was structured, my research seemed to belong to this category. However, I kept reflecting on the real impact of gender on my research, and also on the impact of my “gendered” research on other projects and areas. I came to the conclusion, that a systematic and structural monitoring of gender representation and typification is highly desirable in every field of human activity, compatible with most research fields, and virtually cost-free. It is desirable because most research is currently gender blind and basic statistical data on the representation and behaviour of each gender group is simply missing.

At present, an organic debate on the challenges of integrating gender analysis in gender non-related research does not exist. There is no platform dedicated to researchers in gender non-related studies that wish to come together, get organised and actively contribute to the cause of gender in its broad sense and in its concrete societal embodiment. Most importantly, they cannot connect to the experts in the field, who are the ultimate responsible for (1) providing us with methods and tools that we can borrow (or develop together with them); (2) supervising and

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\(^1\) General Motors in the media this year: [http://fortune.com/2017/01/10/barra-gwc-detroit/](http://fortune.com/2017/01/10/barra-gwc-detroit/) (page last visited 2017-10-04).


\(^3\) ESOF Conference: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/events/20160728-esofo-manchester_it](http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/events/20160728-esofo-manchester_it) (page last visited on 2017-10-04).
assessing the results of our collection and analysis; and (3) integrating these results into the research field where they ought to be best exploited and repurposed in the future. I am a researcher who has not received formal training in gender studies, and with the account in this article I dare step out of my domain of expertise to share my experience and foster a discussion on the integration of gender analysis in gender non-related research, questioning whether it really matters, to whom, and what infrastructure is out there to support the effort that is required of us (Subsec. 4.1).

3 Main challenges

The challenges that researchers today have to face to successfully implement attention to gender in their research are manyfold, but some are subtler than others, and also harder to overcome because they are systemic, and therefore beyond the possibilities of a single individual’s power to change. One has been addressed in the previous section: acceptance. While we are encouraged to make our research gender aware, and it seems a given fact that the inclusion of gender in our research automatically increases the quality of our research and its usefulness to society (see video mentioned in Subsec. 4.2). At the same time we are questioned when we do, and our methods and intentions are put under the microscope. In a way a thorough examination is due, to avoid the easy spread of gender-focus as a trend in research and other domains. But if we are encouraged to consider gender, we should be facilitated in doing so by being offered the assistance, guidance and expertise of researchers in gender studies, with a choice of methods and tools that actually allow us to carry out activities of scientific validity. From which follows the second challenge: credibility. You can’t improvise gender research. Just like you shouldn’t improvise any type of research outside your domain of expertise. And in my estimation there is a risk that the implementation of gender-focus will be inappropriately carried out for lack of expert validation. Not only do we need methods and tools, but specific indicators, ways to handle ethical issues, and ultimately the knowledge to reintegrate of all the data into the discourse of gender studies, where it can be appropriately framed into the big narratives.

And speaking of experts, another challenge is precisely that of educating oneself on gender, from policies to definitions to the reality of gender groups in different parts of the world. For one, I realised only after I submitted the project I present in the next Section, that by “gender” I had always intended “women”, and it is to women that I have dedicated my attention throughout the application. This makes sense and it is not incorrect, but it is incomplete. The guide for applicants of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grants would have been phrased “women’s issues” instead of “gender issues” (see Fig. 1). By extending my domain specific literature and by connecting with new people involved in gender studies and gender policies, I realised that the concept of gender inherently includes every “colour” on the “spectrum”. I realised that just like women are people, members of gender minorities are people, and they all struggle to a varying degree with acceptance, personal fulfilment, career advancement, and so on. And do too – it is very important not to fall into the paradox of excluding men. So when I finally read [2], it became irreversibly clear to me that the correct way to frame the whole matter is that of “gender and human rights”.

What I will not consider as challenges in this specific context are (1) the resistance by peers whose personal opinion happens to be that gender doesn’t matter, even if their comments may in fact be an obstacle to our work in day-to-day research; I go by the directions of the EU where the fact
that gender matters is a well documented fact; and (2) the fact that adding the concern of gender to our research is time consuming, especially considering that it is strictly not necessary. The same has been said about Open Science and the resistance from researchers to document and package their data for sharing [12]. The social usefulness of both gender-focus and Open Science and the added value that they bring to our research should be understood, and therefore the effort required to achieve it justified and worth it.

4 The DaphNet project

DaphNet is a research project focused on interactive art. More specifically, it is concerned with the preservation and the documentation of interactive installation art, where digital technology plays an important role. Both digital technology and interaction challenge the current archiving practices, normally based on homogeneous categories of documents with limited capacity to represent complex relations among documents across different categories [3]. One of the steps needed to properly describe and store the information about the art work is the definition of an ontology for interaction, i.e. a formal representation of the entities involved in the interaction as well as of the modes in which the interaction happens. The development of said ontology is the main output expected from this project. DaphNet is a two years project (2017–2019) and received funding from the EC through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (H2020-MSCA-IF-2015). It is individual funding, so I am both the coordinator and the Principal Investigator of the action; I conduct my research at IPEM (Institute for Psychoacoustics and Electronic Music) at the Department of Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies, of Ghent University in Belgium.

4.1 During the preparation of the project

I started writing this project in May 2014. I had developed an awareness about gender issues in the years prior, but it is only with this application that I decided to be active about it in my research. I did so mainly because the guidelines for applicants were explicitly encouraging the implementation of gender balance and training on gender (Fig. 1). A couple of minutes were also reserved for gender issues in every info session I had participated in. I decided to fully embrace the challenge, and I started to: (1) educate myself with domain specific literature; (2) reach out to experts; (3) build the research topic for my application around the concept of gender. I was moving from the assumption that the implementation of gender related concepts and activities shouldn’t be improvised – and I had little experience on the subject then – and on the contrary it should be informed by existing policies and case studies, and always be monitored by experts.

Before proceeding, it may be noted that in the guide for applicants in 2017 this paragraph in Fig. 1 was moved to page 5 of the H2020 WP 2016-2017 Part 3, and replaced with a very short note directly in the application template. Gender keeps being mentioned on page 14 of the H2020 WP 2016-2017 Part 1 (bold in the text):

All applicants are invited to explore whether and how the gender dimension in research content is relevant to their research, including where appropriate specific studies and training. In addition, gender equality is promoted in all parts of Horizon 2020 including gender balance at all levels of personnel involved in projects. Gender equality issues are also reinforced in the Excellent Science parts of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme dedicated to the ERC and MSCA.
In order to acquire the domain specific vocabulary, in preparation for the project application I collected and processed a number of official reports linked in the documentation accompanying the Marie Skłodowska-Curie call [4,2,5,1,6] (Fig. 2), and I have participated in the annual conference organised by the Italian Association Women and Science on November 12-14, 2014 in Trento, Italy. My attention was attracted by the definition of gender mainstreaming, “an innovative concept, encompassing much more than ‘traditional’ equal opportunities policy”: according to the Council of Europe, gender mainstreaming may be described as “the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making” [4, p.10].

What was appealing to me, was the deep and systemic understanding of the gender problem. However the level of abstraction of this concept was too much for my circumstance: my goal was to implement specific activities in the project application, I couldn’t attack the problem directly at the policy level. Fortunately, the report breaks down gender mainstreaming in four steps [4, p.12]:

1. **Getting organized.** The central focus in this first step is on implementation and organization, and building awareness and ownership.

2. **Learning about gender differences.** The aim of the second step is to describe gender inequality with regard to participation, resources, norms and values and rights, and to evaluate trends without policy intervention.

3. **Assessing the policy impact.** The third step is to analyse the potential gender impact of the policy with reference to participation, resources, norms and values and rights.

4. **Redesigning policy.** The fourth step is to identify ways in which the policy could be redesigned to promote gender equality.
It appeared clear that my research could be useful within the second step: monitoring, observation, data collection, “without policy intervention” but preliminary and preparatory to it. At this stage, I was still trying to build the research topic around gender. The project was taking shape around interactive installation art, and I wished to limit my attention to art works produced by women artists. The words “women artists” (so not “gender”) featured in the title and was prominent in the abstract. This was also the time when I reached out to experts in person. I wanted to meet with them and discuss the ideas that I had developed while reading the literature and receive feedback on the project topic. I contacted several people both at the institution where I was then affiliated (University of Padua, Italy) and the institution with which I was applying for the funding (Ghent University, Belgium). These experts were all women. My experience with them is that I have received strong support and positive feedback from those who were members of University boards for gender balance and equal opportunities – mainly bodies that monitor the situation within the institution and produce periodic reports –, but who were otherwise researchers in other domains. From those who were actually professors in Departments of Gender Studies, I have perceived more resistance and a harsher criticism. I was disappointed at first, because I thought that they would welcome an outsider trying to connect with their research field. In retrospect, I think their resistance was a useful lesson for me, because it stimulated me to analyse the reasons and the ways in which I was approaching gender. By attaching gender to basically every aspect of my research, I was amplifying the arbitrariness of this choice too much. The introduction of attention to gender can often be accused of arbitrariness, but sometimes it is defendable and sometimes less so. In my case I was standing in a weak position. So I found myself reducing the presence of gender throughout my application and limited it to very concrete actions like:
– making sure that at least 40% of the participants involved in the experiments are women;
– assigning a priority to women’s works in the selection of art works for the experiments.

These actions were the direct reflection of existing policies, there was nothing new and nothing specific to my project. I asked myself what else I could do while conducting my research, and I was able to add these two points:
– collecting quantitative data and statistics from the cultural institutions involved in my project and the members of the project network;
– monitoring significant indicators with focused questions in interviews, life stories and questionnaires.

The definitive title for the project turned out to be “Dynamic preservation of interactive art: The next frontier of multimedia cultural heritage” (acronym DaphNet) and the paragraph that was mainly addressing gender in the application read:

According to the definition of gender mainstreaming [4], gender analysis is cross-integrated at macro, meso and micro levels throughout this project cycle. An extensive study on the representation of women in the world of the arts (as artists, curators, promoters, etc.) is currently missing. By carrying out my research on interactive installations, I intend to address the problem by: (1) collecting quantitative data and statistics from the cultural institutions involved in my project and the members of the project network; (2) monitoring significant indicators with focused questions in interviews, life stories and questionnaires.
In addition, (3) I will make sure that at least 40% of the participants involved in the experiments are women; and (4) in the selection of artworks, I will assign a priority to women’s works – granted that the characteristics of the installations meet the requirements of the study. In all these activities, I will be aided by experts in the field, whom I have already contacted personally and whom have agreed to give their contribution (names and affiliations on the project website)⁴.

In addition, I embraced the call’s invitation to pursue formal training on gender:

**Training on gender issues.** In order to build the background functional to my own gender-related activities, I will take at least one of the courses offered by the Centre for Gender Studies at Ghent University (in English)⁵.

### 4.2 Between the evaluation and the start date of the project

The notification of the proposal evaluation was delivered in January 2016. My project started in February 2017. So I almost had a full year during which I knew that I would go on and be a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow, but wasn’t one yet. During this transition time, where I was in-between jobs and I relocated to a new country, I felt motivated to keep being open to opportunities to learn more and engage with gender related activities. In particular, I was very happy when I was contacted by the EC about being interviewed in a video that was being produced precisely on how to implement gender related activities in project applications. I felt it would be interesting to share my experience because I had actually done systematic work and was aware of what I had learnt as well as of what the limits of the situation were. It struck me that my contact person motivated the choice of my profile because I was one of the very few, if not the only one, to my understanding, to implement gender in her proposal, and of course to be successful in the evaluation that year. That was proof to me that implementing gender was not so straightforward, and at the same time I felt proud of having attacked the matter with method and determination.

What struck me next is that in the phone calls that preceded the interview, I was asked direct questions such as “how does implementing gender contributes to the results of your own research”. And while I was trying to explain that the core problem precisely lies in the difficulty to justify and implement gender in gender non-related research, I had the impression that even my solution was being questioned. I found this approach both alarming and confusing: were we on the same team, standing for the same cause, or were they trying to find a weak spot in how I dealt with gender in my project?

The interview was taped during the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) Marie Sklodowska- Curie actions satellite event “Research and Society”, at the University of Manchester on July 29th, 2016 (Fig. 3). The video features experts from several European universities.

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Fig. 2. Official reports used in the preparation of the H2020-MSCA-IF-2015 application.

It was published on the channel of the EU Science & Innovation on November 10th, 2016, with the title “Understanding gender dimension for MSCA projects”. It has been viewed 1,821 times as of October 4th, 2017. The video description reads:

Are you an MSCA fellow or considering applying to an MSCA grant? Then check if the gender dimension is applicable to your research field! Gender dimension is not about the ratio of women and men in your research project, its about your research content. This video will explain you what gender dimension in research is about and give you examples of how it can be integrated within your research project and improve the quality of your research.

Interestingly, this description focuses on the implementation of gender in the research content, leaving it out for the members of the research team which are included in the H2020 definition provided in Sec. 1. The video reports a few interesting research cases where the relevance of gender was not obvious in the beginning but tired out to be key once framed in a different perspective. As for my contribution, I think I stayed on the safe side without going into the details of my project and my implementation, advising aspirant applicants to read the literature and learn and think for themselves how they can make a useful contribution to the cause. The underlying message is that gender should not be seen as a momentary trend that needs to be forced into project applications to gain more points in the evaluation, because this would ultimately do more damage than good to the cause. It’s really important to learn to think differently and strip back the reality we’re used to of the gender neutral (which mostly means male oriented) veil that stands between us and a more liveable place for all people.

The video has only received one comment: “A video plagued with gender stereotypes and generalizations, encouraging gender perspectives before even asking the question ‘Is gender the most relevant variable?’ What about the ‘sleep perspective’? How are night owls affected by different projects?” The “most relevant variable” in what context? But what strikes the most is again the attack on the arbitrariness of gender: why gender and not sleep patterns? It is a legitimate question in a way. Thinking of gender as “gender and human rights” (Sec. 3) would points us, in my opinion, to the correct answer. But the comment has received no answers.

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6 Understanding gender dimension for MSCA projects: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4deWo30RFY (page last visited on 2017-10-04)
The ESOF Conference featured a session where experts explained “why integrating gender (within your team or your research project) can make a difference to the quality of your research” (quoted from the conference program). During the Q&A of that session, I asked a question echoed by another member in the audience: we were both turning to the experts (i.e. professors in gender studies departments) to receive guidance and tools on how to include gender in gender non-related research. Our rationale was that nobody was better than them to develop tools for researchers in other disciplines to use, and would be happy to start collaborations. We can educate ourselves to the best of our capabilities, but the experts should remain the authority for the assessment of our results. I found the answers not very informative, if not disappointing to my scientist ears (“be creative” was one I won’t forget). Sadly, the discussion was feeding the impression that all this attention to gender was just an intrusion of feminism in academia: why promote such an important topic in all research areas if no methods, rigorous approaches or shared goals can be outlined? I believe that it was under the same impression that another young woman conducting research in physics or engineering asked if her application would be penalised for not including gender. Of course this shouldn’t be the case and in my experience it is not (my experience with the evaluation system is that of a very healthy and well managed process), but her concern reflected where the conversation in the room was going: unclear goals, absence of methods, but a fierce support of the ideology. Ultimately, without a credible approach, all the talk about gender in science will backfire and erase even the valuable advancements made so far.

4.3 After the start date of the project
As I’m writing this, I am seven months into my project, with about 3/4 of the project ahead of me. Training wise, I found the webinar “Collecting Data About Gender Identity: Importance, Current Practices, and Exploring International Best Practices” organised by the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, very informative. It clarified some ideas, such as the identification of transgender and gender minority people in large surveys; the “science of measurement”; guidance for researchers and advocates. The webinar was streamed on June 22nd, 2017 and I learnt about it through the Center for Sexology and Gender at the University Hospital in Ghent with whom I had established a connection during the first months of my project. They pointed me to more literature that might help me structure the questionnaires delivered during my experiments.
better, for example [7,8]. Among the upcoming seminars organised by the Doctoral School at Ghent University\textsuperscript{7} are “Media and gender” and “Seminary Gender History”. I have learnt that the “Beleidscel Diversiteit en Gender” (Policy center for diversity and gender) at Ghent University\textsuperscript{8} offers a remarkable variety of services, information and is very sensitive to the well-being of students. I sensed a general trend in European universities to be very open to new policies that would increase the well-being of gender minorities and the spirit of acceptance behind this trend is uplifting. However they were not aware of the controversy on gender neutral pronouns that has received sensational mediatic attention in Canada since late 2016 and ended with an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code in 2017. The awareness of gender minority identities, rights and needs is so young in the Old World that there is little question about inclusive policies. However Canada and the Unites States of America could be an eye opener for potential controversies that lie ahead: it is to the benefit of everyone that such tensions should be avoided in the future. Hence a cautious approach to the subject matter seems desirable, and from my perspective this calls even more for scientific methods in gender non-related studies at every level of data design, collection and analysis. Those who opposed the bill in Canada partially backed up their position by claiming that several statements in the legislative text were in contrast with well established scientific literature. Solid knowledge must be at the core of policy design and decision making, and without a scientific approach to gendered analysis in non gender related field there is a high risk of polluting the waters and ultimately damaging those who would benefit the most from these studies in the first place. I keep myself up to date on the social and political discourse around this complex matter in order to maximise my ability to reflect and respect gender minorities in my future experiments (on interactive art) and at the same time to minimise the chance that I distort or misrepresent them. I have tried to express this intention to evolve from an “only woman” to an all encompassing concept of gender in a recent project application for a three years grant funded under the programme H2020-MSCA-IF-2017 (submitted on September 14th, 2017, results in early 2018). The awareness that makes many researchers and groups embrace all the colours on the gender spectrum from a starting position mainly focussed on women is not only characteristic of my personal path but for example is reflected by the Working Group for Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Science (GEMS) of the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA), which I have joined in 2017, that has recently changed its name in Working Group for Gender Equality and Diversity for Mobile Researchers in Science (keeping the same acronym GEMS). Needs and requests from the people included in this now larger pool may vary, but the bottom line is that all of them are people and, as I mentioned in Sec. 3, the right way to frame the issue is by associating gender and human rights.

During the first six months of my project, I have worked on the data collected during an exploratory study on interactive art involving a sound installation for collaborative music making called “BilliArT” by artist Tim Vets\textsuperscript{9}. In line with the ideas I have expressed so far, I have tried to identify useful ways to implement gender in the experiment, discarding those possibilities that were not backed up by the literature I had come across in my training. The options were eventually reduced to two: (1) respect of gender non binary self-identification in the section for personal information in the questionnaire, and (2) observation of eventual relevant patterns.

\textsuperscript{7} Doctoral Schools at Ghent University: http://www.ugent.be/doctoralschools/en (page last visited on 2017-10-04).
\textsuperscript{8} BeleidscelDiversiteitenGender: https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/voorwaart-ugent/diversiteit-en-gen (page last visited on 2017-10-04).

across the rest of the data collected, without a theory *a priori* and without looking for something specific. Point 1 relates to the policies for inclusion and well-being of all the gender minorities. Once the (legitimate) existence of these groups is recognised, forcing a binary choice for gender is a conceptual contradiction and a practical act of disrespect, just as it would be for a choice regarding the race limited to two races, or not allowing interracial identities, or going about the matter hypocritically with “Caucasian” and “other”. The webinar mentioned above and [8] have been precious sources to develop my awareness on how to formulate the choices in the questionnaire. Point 2 does not require much effort at design time, but can take up as much time as one is willing to give at analysis time, depending on how far and how deep the search is pushed. The fact that this data collection can be performed at a virtual zero cost goes to its advantage. It is hard to make a case on why it should not be performed. The researcher can then proceed to only analyse the data of their interest, or try to see if there are noticeable differences between sexes or genders – and also if there are no differences between them, which might be just as interesting depending on the context. This type of action qualifies as “monitoring”, and it is desirable as expressed in Sec. 2. In my case, the data were collected via questionnaire, oral interview, audio and video recordings, and the data log of the tracking system involved in the installation setup. The questions that the users were asked addressed different aspect of the installation likability, usability and design, besides general background information including their familiarity with the technology involved and their degree of formal musical training. The video recording and the log data were quantitative references for the duration of the game and complex parameters like the Quantity of Motion (QoM, see [10]). Every single data set can be measured or compared in function of gender. Considering that this was an exploratory study, however, the number of participants was not sufficient to have statistical significance once the group was split per gender group. The direction that has been explored the most is that of word clouds built with the description of the participants mood before and after the experiment [11]. The lessons learnt from this exploratory study include the fact that (1) a great number of interesting questions about gender can be asked once clean data have been collected, and this is a much unexplored trend in gender non-related fields; and (2) that the step of analysis would benefit from, if not require, the supervision and collaboration of an expert in gender studies, for the assessment of the results and ultimately for their integration in the research field where they ought to be best exploited and repurposed in the future.

5 Conclusions

In this article, I have presented my experience and the problems I encountered in trying to implement gender analysis in gender non-related research. In particular, I have explained my motivation for doing so, and the steps I have takes from the beginning to educate myself, connect with experts and achieve a degree of competence that would allow me to carry out this task in a credible way with useful results. The account of the experience is a personal elaboration of the choices I have made and of their consequences as I have observed so far, considering I am only one-fourth of the way into the duration of my current project. It contributes to the conversation in a field where I have received no formal academic training, and I encourage the experts to collect contributions like mine and [help us] develop flexible tools to borrow and use in our research fields. I see my commitment to the gender dimension as an organic effort to bring back the human factor in research as well as in every other aspect of life, in the belief that in the long
term it will bring a revolutionary positive change in society, and that in the short term it can accelerate the healing process that many women and gender minorities are still going through and that holds them back from developing a full personal and professional life.

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The core of her research lies in the study of the relationship between historical audio recordings and their digital (digitised) representation – a relationship which is not only very complex, it also develops over time (context, digital philology, hermeneutic implications of encoding cultural objects). She is also co-founder of the University startup Audio Innova, for which she has designed and developed software modules to automatize preservation routines and controls for data integrity verification.

She has published her work in international peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings. She has participated in several international research projects, involving some of the finest sound archives in Europe. She is active in science popularization with articles and presentations, and she is a member of the Steering Committee of the Ghent Center for Digital Humanities (GhentCDH: http://www.ghentcdh.ugent.be/) and of the the Working Group for Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Science (GEMS) of the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA). She is General Chair of the International Workshop on Digital Philology for the Preservation of Multimedia Archives (2015, 2016: http://digitalphilology.org/).
Reversal of the role of the sexes in Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

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Abstract

Cognitive dissonance, according to Leon Festinger, is the psychological discomfort experienced by an individual maintaining two or more inconsistent cognitions coincidently, when performing a task in sharp contrast to those cognitions; or when encountering new information in sharp contrast to existing cognitions. The existence of dissonance will motivate the individual to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance. The objective of this paper is to delve into Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, reading Albee through Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, to show that individuals do their best to reduce their dissonance while encountering strong discrepancy between their own actions and common beliefs in the society about how males and females should act. Edward Albee's masterful play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is concerned with the marital problems of the middle-aged couple, George and Martha drawing the younger couple, Nick and Honey as guests into their frustrated relationship. The older couple represent reversal of the role of the sexes as George is the titular head of their married life; it is domineering Martha who in reality is in charge. Infertile George and Martha also reflect the kind of sexual reversal in which they see themselves behaving contrary to what American culture dictates about how women and men should behave. Suffering from various degrees of cognitive dissonance, they adopt a completely delusive attitude towards the problem as they choose to create an imaginary child so as to conform to gender expectations.

Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, Festinger, Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Sexual Reversal

1. Introduction

Edward Albee (1928- 2016), an American playwright, is considered as one of the significant dramatists of the world theatre who wrote many interesting and effective plays throughout his prolific career. Albee received many achievements for his works including three Pulitzer Prizes, the Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement, and many other honors. In 1996, President Clinton conferred honor upon Albee, "In your rebellion, the American theater was reborn” (qtd. in Bottoms 1).

Edward Albee's early works portray a world inhabited by characters striving to realize their identity in a social and political arena of change. The latter plays are mostly concerned with the existential dilemma at the heart of modern life. However, there is unity in the entire Albee canon as he attempts to explore new issues of humanity in each of his plays, and each play indicates
"how crucial it is to live honorably – true to oneself, true to one's art, true to one's ethical and philosophical beliefs" (Zinman 9).

Edward Albee began his career with The Zoo Story (1958) which “proved a revelation in the context of the American theatre of the time, embodying onstage the restless, youthful energy of the disenfranchised ‘Beat’ generation” (Bottoms 3). After the success of The Zoo Story, Albee once again criticizes his contemporary society sustaining itself on national illusions of prosperity and equality in his first Broadway play, namely Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1962). Accordingly, "Albee's political and cultural agenda is woven into the characters' occupations; it follows, then, that this agenda is woven into the characters' preoccupations, and thus into the dialogue" (Zinman 40). Albee, as a social critic, attacks on the American way of life in this play. According to Albee, "humanity’s truth is layered and complex, not to be found in society’s platitudes or the promises of social conformity" (Saddik 37).

Among the themes of Edward Albee, the examination of dysfunctional family, power, human relationships, the role of the sexes were the most prevalent ones. Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf is a play concerned with the extent to which men and women conform to what is regarded appropriate male and female behavior within the context of postwar America. This study will try to gain an understanding of how the play explores the theme of reversal of the role of the sexes in its representation of human relationships, and why the role of the sexes are subverted — all this information will be analyzed through Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance.


Festinger is a social psychologist who wrote a book titled A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance in 1957. His book investigates the notion of cognitive dissonance which is some feeling of psychological discomfort experienced by an individual. Cognitive dissonance results from incongruous cognitions held simultaneously, when performing a task in sharp contrast to existing cognitions; or when encountering new information contradicting existing cognitions. Some of these cognitions include "knowledge about oneself: what one does, what one feels, what one wants or desires, what one is, and the like. Other elements of knowledge concern the world in which one lives: what is where, what leads to what, what things are satisfying or painful or inconsequential or important, etc." (Festinger 9). Jack W. Brehm affirms, “Sometimes an individual engages in behavior inconsistent with his beliefs or feelings [...] It is also probable that the occurrence of such discrepancies may create in the individual some feeling of discomfort — i.e. a psychological tension of some kind" (164). Accordingly, dissonance among two cognitions may arise due to the occurrence of new happenings over which an individual has no control, due to what “culture or group standards may dictate,” due to “logical inconsistency,” due to "past experience,” or for any other reason (Festinger 14).

The formal statement of a dissonant relationship is that two cognitions are dissonant if the opposite of one follows from the other. In other words, dissonance results when regarding two elements alone in an individual’s cognition, which are called X and Y, "if not-x follows from y" (Festinger13). As an illustration of the dissonant relation just described, we can consider the case of an individual who is fearful in spite of acknowledging that there is no enemy within his
neighborhood. It is noteworthy to mention that “two cognitive elements may be dissonant for a person living in one culture and not for a person living in another, or for a person with one set of experiences and not for a person with another” (Festinger 15). The term "consonance" in this theory is also used to speak about the relation among cognitions, “if considering a pair of elements, either one does follow from the other, then the relation between them is consonant” (Festinger 15).

The way the individual reacts to such discrepancies captures the attention of Festinger in his studies. Festinger notes that cognitive dissonance can be regarded as “an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction” (Festinger 3). In fact, human beings have an inner drive to hold all their political attitudes, social attitudes, and many others in harmony. Festinger adds, “similar to the action of a drive, the greater the dissonance, the greater will be the intensity of the action to reduce the dissonance” (Festinger 18). The existence of dissonance also motivates the individual to “actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance” (Festinger 3).

Festinger examines two types of exposure to new information in his theory: 1. "Voluntary contact with information" (a means of dissonance reduction) 2. "Involuntary and forced contact with information" (main source of dissonance) (Festinger 131). The individual, involuntarily, might be exposed to new information through forced contact which happens in circumstances under which an individual has some new information impinge upon him. For example, "unforeseen consequences of one’s own actions bring about experiences which force the existence of new cognition" (Festinger 133). Interaction with other people is another cause of dissonance if others with whom the individual communicates do not share his ideas. According to Festinger, involuntary contact with information "probably occurs most frequently when, in trying to reduce dissonance by getting agreement or support from others, one inadvertently creates dissonance in someone else" (Festinger 133). Festinger also explains how the individual tries to reduce dissonance by voluntary contact with information when there is a large amount of dissonance.

The seeking of support and the seeking of new information must be done in a highly selective manner [...] A person would expose himself to sources of information which he expected would add new elements which would increase consonance but would certainly avoid sources which would increase dissonance. (30)

Cognitions, which are in a dissonant relationship, can be changed so that they will be in a consonant relationship — that is, so they will be consistent with each other. Festinger focuses on three possible ways through which existing dissonance can be reduced in the case of the habitual cigarette smoker being exposed to inconsistent “information from a newspaper or magazine, from friends, or even from some physicians” (Festinger 6). In the first method, changing a behavioral cognitive element in accordance with some knowledge in the environment would lead to dissonance reduction. For example, the smoker may change his cognition about what he does so as to reduce the dissonance; that is, he might stop smoking. Thus, “his cognition of what he does will be consonant with the knowledge that smoking is bad for his health” (Festinger 6). The second method involves changing an environmental cognitive element. In this instance, changing
the environmental element is not possible since the smoker is in involuntary contact with inconsistent information. Adding new cognitive elements so as to harmonize the inconsistencies is the third method which results in reduction of dissonance. As Myrdal declares, the individual tries to “find a means of reconciling the inconsistencies” (qtd. in Festinger 7). In other words, he rationalizes his behavior by adding the third cognitive element. For example, the hypothetical smoker might add the new cognition that he would gain weight if he gave up smoking. Adding the third cognition to the existing cognitions would reduce the dissonance since the knowledge of the danger of smoking is no longer dissonant with the smoker’s action of smoking. Festinger points out that attempts to reduce dissonance through each of these three ways might prove futile, resulting in more psychological discomfort,

The presence of pressures to reduce dissonance, or even activity directed toward such reduction, does not guarantee that the dissonance will be reduced. A person may not be able to find the social support needed to change a cognitive element, or he may not be able to find new elements which reduce the total dissonance. In fact, it is quite conceivable that in the process of trying to reduce dissonance, it might even be increased. (23)

Festinger regards reality as the basic constituent of cognitive elements, and believes that “these elements of cognition are responsive to reality” (10). He suggests that “the reality may be what others think or do; in other instances the reality may be what is encountered experientially or what others have told him” (11). Festinger believes, “When someone is out of touch with reality, it becomes very noticeable” (10). Accordingly, he elaborates on those circumstances in which the elements of cognition do not correspond with a given reality.

Persons frequently have cognitive elements which deviate markedly from reality, at least as we see it. Consequently, the major point to be made is that the reality which impinges on a person will exert pressures in the direction of bringing the appropriate cognitive elements into correspondence with that reality. This does not mean that the existing cognitive elements will always correspond .... If the cognitive elements do not correspond with a certain reality which impinges, certain pressures must exist (11)

Festinger also notes that sometimes people have elements of cognition that do not correspond with reality, with the aim of avoiding dissonance. In fact, such people tend to have false cognitions when they have cognitions which are very consequential to them to the extent that having them in accordance with reality would produce huge dissonance. Or when they face dissonance-increasing situations, they sometimes adopt a delusive attitude by denying the reality of the situation which led to the existence of dissonance.
3. Discussion
The way in which cognitions are defined by Festinger, as they can include attitudes, beliefs, values, knowledge of one’s own behavior, the behavior of others, and so on, not only gives a general form to the theory but also determines a wide variety of contexts to which the theory’s implications can be applied. Also, the existence of dissonance “between the cognition of the action taken and those opinions or knowledges which tend to point to a different action” is common to all people’s everyday life “where an opinion must be formed or a decision taken” (Festinger 5). As mentioned above, Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance has its own existence in everyday life, therefore, its different aspects contribute to real life situations which are frequently presented in literature.

The only researcher who has investigated Albee’s plays in the light of Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance is Robert M. Post. He has briefly examined specific communication problems in a number of Albee’s plays so as to portray the characters who suffer from cognitive dissonance. Edward Albee’s plays are often discussed in terms of the battle of the sexes. Nonetheless, Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance offers a fascinating insight into reversal of the role of the sexes within Albee’s plays in the present study.

In Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Albee depicts the clash between husband and wife, namely George and Martha in the presence of the younger couple, Nick and Honey as guests. Alan Schneider refers to George and Martha as” dinosaurs battling on the cliff of emotional survival” (qtd. in Zinman 40). This clash between George and Martha portrays the struggle between two sexes over power both of whom exist the illusions of identity in America in the second half of the twentieth century. Raheem Rahman Jaf asserts that the play "exposed the falsity of American dream and how the modern families adopted illusion as a form of reality"(62). As Zinman says,

George’s and Martha’s names – suggesting their surname may well be Washington – hint at a sociopolitical concern, and so they become representatives of both U.S. history (it is, after all, the college’s History department in which George is a "bog") and the moral values of the past. Their being childless suggests the end of all they represent culturally.

The fact that George and Martha are infertile makes them seeing themselves behaving contrary to what American culture dictates, thereby producing dissonance. George and Martha really like to have children through which they can conform to the very ideal gender norms imposed upon them by the society. But, George, who is a history professor in the department, is unable to have a family and provide for them. And Martha is unable to create a life of her own through motherhood in the patriarchal society. As a result, the couple’s life consists of a series of dangerous fun and games through which George and Martha think that they can decrease their dissonance. It is noteworthy that the importance of the cognitions has been a crucial factor in the magnitude of dissonance. “The more these elements are important to, or valued by, the person, the greater will be the magnitude of a dissonant relation between them” (Festinger16). The amount of dissonance that Martha experiences is great since she is too much interested in becoming a potentially powerful woman.
Dissonance arises in George and Martha as their actions are dissonant with the beliefs in the society about gender norms. Not being able to bear children, Martha is unable to change her behavioral cognitive element. Festinger points out that any change in the behavior is not possible so as to reduce dissonance since some behavior "may not be under the voluntary control of the person" (26). Instead, domineering Martha tries to take a complacent attitude towards the problem by choosing to undervalue her husband's manhood through her verbal games in front of Nick and Honey. As Shams and Pourgiv assert, "One striking characteristic of the play is the game in which characters seemingly mimic the opposite gender roles" (87). Discontented Martha always boasts that George has been beaten by her father in a boxing match. She makes fun of George who can't be a figure of power like her father being the president of the department. Here, there is a kind of voluntary contact with information as Martha exposes herself to those information which makes her more dominant. In this way, she has power over her husband in the patriarchal society in spite of being unable to fulfill her role as a wife in the society, thereby decreasing her dissonance.

MARTHA. You didn't do anything; you never do anything; you never mix. You just sit around and talk.

GEORGE. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to act like you? Do you want me to go round all night braying at everybody, the way you do?

MARTHA (Braying). I DON'T BRAY!

GEORGE (Softly). All right ... you don't bray. (Albee 8; Act 1)

Nick and Honey, who have been invited by forceful Martha at her father’s request at such a late hour, are presented as a counterpoint to George and Martha in terms of their age. However, this young couple also reflect the kind of sexual reversal in which Honey sees herself acting contrary to common beliefs about how females as wives should act in their married lives. Unlike Martha, Honey is not a mother because she is afraid to be pregnant: "I don't want a child" (Albee 136, Act 2). Not being able to change neither her behavioral cognitive element nor her knowledge about the society's gender expectations, Honey resorts to alcohol which is "the attractive and readily available anodyne" to rectify her inner conflicts (Dircks 70). The presence of Nick and Honey causes George and Martha's delusive method to deal with their dissonance to be revealed. George and Martha's child has been mentioned to no one. Martha mentions him to their guests although George has asked her not to do so. These incidents lead to the climactic point of the play where George tries to make Martha think that the way they have reduced their dissonance throughout these years is contradicted by the reality of their life.

Not being able to tolerate the harsh reality of their life – being childless – George and Martha have created an imaginary child for years so as to eliminate their cognitive dissonance. Adding the new cognition to the existing cognitions creates consonance since the common belief that couples must conform to the ideal gender roles by having children is no longer dissonant with the present reality of their life. It is noticeable that they make no great effort to reduce their cognitive dissonance; they do try to rationalize the real situation which is dissonant with the desired
situation, a concept which is explained by Robert B. Zajonc: "The psychoanalytic notion of rationalization is a literal example of a concept which assumes both rationality and irrationality—it holds, namely, that man strives to understand and justify painful experiences and to make them sensible and rational, but he employs completely irrational methods to achieve this end"(261-2). Pourgiv and Hoovash compare Albee’s aim in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf to the “aim of Brecht’s alienation effect”; both intend to “shock the audience and motivate them to reassess their lives and their society” through revealing realities (18).

George comes up with a plan to shock Martha through forced contact with information which are inconsistent with Martha’s belief about her supposed motherhood. At the end of the play, George announces the death of their imaginary son in a car accident to Martha. George is a potential source of dissonance for Martha at the final moments of the play as she says, "YOU... CAN'T... DO...THAT! "(Albee 245, Act 3). Suffering from horror, Nick and Honey leave. Martha, who cannot stand the loss of her child, suggests that they can create another fictive child, but George refuses, believing that the game must be ended. As Festinger believes, the individual may not be able to change his actions since "the change may be painful or involve loss," or because “the present behavior may be otherwise satisfying” (25). She still desires to fill the void left by the absence of a child in their life through conformity to the specified gender norms within the society. The play ends as George wonders, "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf"(Albee 256, Act 3). Martha answers, "I ... am ... George ... I ... am"(Albee 257, Act 3). Martha’s answer indicates that she is unable to tolerate the emotional loss brought upon her. However, this testifies that she is perhaps on the "brink of awareness and maturity" in the future (Post 59).

4. Conclusion

Cognitive dissonance is the psychological discomfort experienced by an individual performing a task in sharp contrast to existing beliefs; or when encountering new information in sharp contrast to existing beliefs and values. According to Festinger, the presence of dissonance motivates the individual to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance. When Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? was written by Albee in 1962, American people were supposed to conform to the very ideal gender norms imposed upon them by the society. Cognitive dissonance between their infertility and common beliefs about gender roles is created in George and Martha. Creating an imaginary son so as to eliminate their dissonance can be regarded as their attempt at rationalization. Nonetheless, George, who is excessively dominated by aggressive Martha throughout the play, succeeds to shock Martha through involuntary contact with some information about the death of their imaginary child. These information are dissonant with Martha’s beliefs about her supposed motherhood, but they help her to be no longer too much concerned about irrational methods which can make her a conformist in the society.

References

Feminism dates back to early 19th century and throughout the years, It has evolved and expanded. Gender issue and Feminism have taken new dimensions that greatly affect portrayal of gender issues especially gender inequality. Feminism described as a movement which women fought years ago for their basic freedom rights and are still fighting. Feminism has been influenced by social and political practices and patriarchy system inspired by culture and stereotypes norms.

Cinema, a very important aspect of the history and present, sustains rather complicated relationship with feminism. Cinema has evolved over centuries as the most popular and multitalented art form.

Masses have watched films from centuries for the purpose of entertainment. Films have philosophical effect on spectators leaving the spectator to perish a certain opinion or definition about the subject. For audience in mainstream cinema, nuance of performances become substantial.
Feminist Movement had clearly left an impact on cinema. Many articles, papers, books have been written criticizing the women portrayal in films.

I open this paper with a quote that circumscribes Feminism with intentions to an assortment of analyses of the position of women, and variety of approaches for social change.

"We are struggling for a uniting word, but the good news is that we have a uniting movement"- Emma Watson (2014)

In this paper I want to foreground the importance of women representation and the obligation of creative industry. In many ways acclaimed authors like Laura Mulvey, Annette Kuhn, Molly Haskell have raised criticism over the presentation of women in film and media.

As in Kuhn quotes "....Ideal female young and fashionably dressed is considered oppressive as it forces women to live up to the cultural construction standards". (Kuhn, 1982)

Women inferiority is deeply rooted in our society from centuries and this inferiority influences many working sectors all around the globe. Cinema being the most versatile and popular art and entertainment form is obliged to represent women in non-submissive pattern. My argument revolves around two big film industries Hollywood and Hollywood.

**The relationship between Hollywood and Hollywood**

Hollywood and Hollywood, both are the largest producers of films in the world. More than 5 Billion viewers on annually basis watch their product. Hoth Hollywood and Hollywood are the oldest industries and responsible for generating large sum of revenues.

Millions and Hillions of people watch films produced by these two big industries. Hollywood films in terms of script writing, camera shots and movements and even in fashion largely inspire Hollywood. The famous film Partner (2007) script was copied from Will Smith Hitch (2005), Salam-E-ishq (2007) was plagiarized from Love actually (2003). And there are endless examples where Hollywood has been largely inspired by Hollywood.

In this paper, I would like to discuss the shared responsibility of Hollywood and Hollywood to portray women. Over 5

Hillion viewers succumb Hollywood and Hollywood products, leaving an impact on audience ideologies.
There are many issues like women representation as sexual object, gender pay gap, less access to job, gender disparity which subsist in these two big industries which hires thousand of people and their product is watched by masses.

As Molly Haskell quotes "...A movie heroine could act on the same power and career drives as the man only if climax, they took second place to its sacred love of a man otherwise, she stimulated the right to that love."[1973:4]

Stereotype representation of women in films

There are various dimensions of film and feminism. Film reflect the society and its very vital to not to typecast women. In films women are generally linked to houstrained situation as housewives or mothers or as sex objects. Women in films and media are sexualized and treated as objects and they are there in films just to entertain men and stimulate the assumed male audience. The film directors, producers, screenplay writer generally assume men to be the audience and they completely ignore female audiences. It's like women is denying her sex before buying the film ticket. Famous authors like Laura Mulvey in her theories have mentioned male gaze and the notion of female audience in the theatre. Films generally typecast women in roles of dumb blonde, young and slim notifying to our image of superlative beauty, femme fatale, bitch and as romantic slaves. Our patriarchal values are deeply rooted in almost every culture thus, resulting into the submissive representation of women in films.

Men in films are generally shown to be himself when fighting but least shown to be himself when portraying emotions whereas women have always been linked to melodrama and are shown least interested in the quest of knowledge and attainment. Film and media advertise patriarchal ideology as in Hollywood, hero is the one who initiates the action and saves the women and Hollywood encounter same situations in films. If women are shown independent, she is shown to be sexy with bitchy traits as to stimulate male audience watching the film. If women are shown to be initiating the action she is shown to have masculine traits and characteristics but retaining her sex appeal. Like for example, Avery popular Film Jurassic World, Claire Dearing the operational manager of Jurassic park is shown to be independent and intelligent but she is also shown to be ignorant about her family and also shown running in heels behind dinosaurs. Showcasing women as a sexual object and the bearer of portraying nudity is the deeply rooted issue in the film industry whether its Hollywood or Hollywood. Film like "Bad Teacher" which released in 2011 with IMDB rating of 5.7 has shown Cameron Diaz raising money by washing car for her breast implant in order to attract attention from fellow teachers. Similarly in Bollywood, acclaimed film like "Dirty Picture"(2011) a biopic reflecting the society we live in showcases Vidya Halan in the role of women who does not hesitate to sleep or stimulate sexual desire in order to grab a role in Films. Temptation
As Noami Wolf quotes "To live in a culture in which women are routinely naked where men aren’t is to learn inequality in little ways all day long". -Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth

Women are used as visual accessories in films from many decades. Some of the key films which has portrayed sexisms and materialistic plot are show girls (1995), crazy stupid love (2011), how to marry a millionaire (1953), 30 minutes or less (2011), 50/50 (2011), confessions of a marriage counselor (2013), Jab We met (2007), Student of the Year (2102), Grand Masti (2013) and so on.

Considering Hollywood, Film like Jab We met (2007) Kareena Kapoor; a very popular actress of Hollywood is shown to play the role of girl called Geet, who is vivacious, modern but gullible for love and allow her to get rescued by the male hero. Contemplating Hollywood, In film Hreaking The waves (1996), is a film about wife whose world revolves around her husband, she cries screamingly when he leaves for work and when her husband gets paralyzed, she does whatever the husband asks like sleeping with other men and in the end she gets rewarded in heaven.

Women has seemingly offered less dialogues in films, they are associated with stereotype genre like melodrama, less women centric films are made thus, instigating women less manifestation on the screen. It can be easily seen on the movie posters where women face is generally hidden but their bodies are revealing. And the script generally demands them to wear short or the dresses outlining every curve. The famous film twilight saga (2011), very popular with teenagers and young audiences portrays a scene where Hero Edward and the female lead Hella performs sex resulting into bruises on Bella’s body and Bella is totally fine with it making it look like if your husband or boyfriend bruises ou, its perfectly alright.

Alone in Hollywood From 2011-2016, less than one-third of speaking characters on screen were females. And Hollywood statistics are also alarming.

The enigma of female representation involves type casted genre offered to women, less female directors, writers, cinematographers, gender pay gap.

Films are often said to be the reflection of society. According to Center for study of women in TV and Film, Women in Hollywood are accounted to be only 14% of all jobs in behind the scenes like director, script writer, executive producer and so on.

In Hollywood, there is only one female to 6.2 males in the industry. In Hollywood, the trend of item songs is very upsetting. Over 35% women are shown in characters portraying nudity. Producers and directors believe it to be the hit formula. Almost every film has item song and the female performing it is named as an item girl. Seemingly, for Hollywood it’s more important to have item numbers than to have a sensible plot. Item songs promotes male gaze as men in audience are stimulated by a female actress dancing in revealing clothes thus sexualizing
women as an object. Dialogues are also the part of enigma which Hollywood and Hollywood shares. For Example, In Skyfall (2011), there is dialogue between Eve and Bond, Eve: "Room service. "James Bond: "I didn't order anything, not even you." Here, the dialogue depicts the women as an object that can be ordered. Similarly In Hollywood a very popular dialogue from hit romantic comedy Kambakkht Ishq (2009), "Marriage se pehle ladkiyaan sex object hoti hain aur marriage ke baad they object to sex." (Girls are merely sex objects before marriage and after marriage they object to have sex.

These kinds of lines that degrade women position and respect are repeatedly used in these two biggest industries. The song of Hollywood like "Sajna mei vaari vaari tu hi toh mera sansaar hai" from the film Honeymoon Travel pvt. Ltd. (2007), "Tu cheez badi hai mast mast from the film Mohra (1994) and film Machine (2017) translated as Oh, Dear husband you are my world my god and you are a object which is very beautiful respectively. These dialogues and songs depict and reflect the status of women that is very distressing.

Similarly, In Hollywood Marilyn Monroe regarded as an ideal image of women remain as a sex symbol for men. The issue of feminism is definitely evolving, film actresses like Joan Crawford. Katherine Hepburn and Hollywood actresses like Kangna Ranaut, Nandita Das, Kalki Koechlin, Vidya Halan, Priyanka chopra are challenging men in the film industry. But the irony is that it’s generally believed the success of women results into failed marriages or people often regard them as home breakers. Women centric films are regarded as less capable to attract audiences to the theatre thus generating lower revenues.

Some films are being made with women being an important character. Like The character of Black widow in Avengers (2012), A very important character but she is shown to be only one woman amongst six superheroes and she is shown to wear tight leather clothes. Nevertheless, It’s quite a powerful character, Similarly in Hollywood Films like Dangal (2016) and Pink (2016) releases with women being in very important and central roles. Hut seemingly in both films, men somehow rescue them.

The scrupulous representations of females in the film industry are may be not intention but substantially evident.

Conclusion

Gender stereotypes exist in films industry and somehow they are making progress. The demographics of the spectators and their actual inclination should be accounted more seriously by the creative industry to enhance more constructive representation and to be more comprehensive to the masses. The answer can be to promote women engagement and participation in decision-making jobs like producer, director, and scriptwriter. Abolishing stereotypes norms can lead to the ideal representation of women in films that influences
billions of people all around the globe. I would like to conclude by saying "Women don't need to be the hero of the film, if only heroine is portrayed equally and with her own agency without any kind of discrimination".

End Notes

The study of migration has remained largely male oriented. Newspapers, books, articles which concerns itself with migration issue in Bihar talks mostly about men. It talks about the causes of migration, changing nature of migration, labor and capital and in all this women have no place. Capital generation is largely considered male domain. Women tend to remain invisible in these mainstream discourse of migration. However, it is very important to talk about the impact of migration on women as it shapes their lives. Focusing on gender, brings about a different reality about migration, labor and capital. The case of study in my paper is women of Bihar, to be particular wives of Bihari migrants.

In my research I have used folktales of Bihar like jatsaari, ropani, sohani, and Bhojpuri movie/ Bihari movie songs sung by female singers like Sadhna, Devi, Klapna, and Malini Awasthi. These songs sing of pain of migration and talks of the challenges and grief a woman goes through in the absence of her husband. I have also used works of famous Bhojpuri playwright, lyricist, actor, folk singer, folk dancer, and social activist, “Bhikhari Thakur”. Popularly known as “Shakespeare of Bhojpuri literature”.

LOCATING BIHAR

Bihar is one of the poorest and third largest populated state of India. It is in northern part of the country. 33.74 % of the population of the state is under below poverty line and 4.42 million people migrate out of Bihar every year according to a report by the “Indian Institute of Public Administration”. Lack of infrastructure, technology, agricultural facilities and absence of law and
order has contributed towards its backwardness. The 15 years of reign of RJD government from 1990 to 2005 left the law and order and economy of the state in perils. Crime became rampant and kidnapping an everyday thing. During this period the entire nation flourished with economic growth rate of 6 to 7 % but Bihar continued to be at the peak of poverty with growth rate below 3% (Thakur Institute of Management studies and research). Political, institutional and economic failure resulted into increase in unemployment and migration of the masses in search of opportunities. The cultural and patriarchal practices of the region and risk of violence and sexual abuse does not allow women to go to the other states and earn, mostly it is men who go. They are the head of the family and responsible for running the family. In many cases men leave their wives to take care of the family, this has had a grave impact on the lives of women. I propose to look at the condition of such women in the state of Bihar.

**Folk songs and Bhojpuri movie songs of migration**

Folk song has been part of all the cultures of the world. Bihari folk songs of migration is largely sung by women. It talks of their hardships, insecurities and loneliness in the absence of the husband. These songs can be considered as a record of the culture, and a telling of a part of history of “Bihari Women”. A history not written by “men” but sung by women.

Of many, Jatusaari, Ropani, and Sohani are the three types of folk songs sung by women of Bihar. These songs are melancholic in tone and are sung by women while working. This tradition of singing and working can still be seen in the villages of Bihar. The purpose is to reduce the burden of the work by singing. Till 30-40 years back women of the rural household in Bihar used to grind grains every day for the everyday cooking. From my grandmother, (Dhanvati Devi) I got to know that for every work there is a different song, different song for grinding the grains, songs of making chutney, songs of cleaning, songs of cooking, songs of working in the field, ropnigeet is the song for sowing the paddy and katnigeet is the song for harvesting the paddy. The list goes on. Jatusaari, Rupani suhani are melancholic songs sung by left wives in order to express their pain and the difficulties they faced in the absence of the husband.

“**Toharo je maiya prabhu ho awari chhinariya ho**

Tauli naapiye telwa dihalan ho ram

Toharo bahiniya prabhu ho awari chhinariya ho

Loiye ganiye hathwa ke dihalan ho ram”

(oh dear husband, your mother is such a bitch, she does not give me enough oil to cook,

and your sister is no less, she doesn’t give me enough flour to make roti)

In the following lines, women of the house is complaining about the everyday problem she faces. In the absence of the husband women often get confronted by the problem of who has access to the resources, and since they do not work and do not have access to the resources she is not respected in the family. The woman here complains about how in the absence of the husband she is ill-treated by her in-laws. She is not given enough resources to even cook. There is a duality in the treatment of women by the family of the man, on the one hand she is not allowed or she
is not taken by the husband to work with him, on the other hand she is ill-treated for not being an earning member. Such women are considered burden. In my conversation with some of the women whose husband have migrated, they showed the similar concern, how on the one hand they are expected to take care of the entire household alone and on the other hand they are neither given credit for the same, nor access to resources. Most of the women in that case live life of a slave, killing their personal desires.

“Chadte chait, kaise lag jala agiya ho rama,
bairi, ketna bujhawe dono ankhian,
bairi papi ho gaile pawanwan, rama ho,
Tore bina balamwan”

“As soon as the month of chait( the hindu new year month) arrives,
I start burning with desire, my eyes are now tired of waiting for you,
And this sinful, bewitching wind is of no relief to me without you, dear husband”

In the above lines the woman is complaining about the absence of the husband, she is suffering from the pangs of love. The lines are sexually explicit. The sexual desire is making her suffer, the pleasant wind and the cool weather is ideal for the love making but the husband is missing. In many cases just after the marriage men leave the bride to her parent’s house and return after few years. The song voices the pain of such women, waiting for their husband to return. Such situation also creates fear among woman, that their husband might get married to other woman in the distant land. Bhikari Thakur, in his folk songs has captured such insecurity and pain very well. In one of his songs the woman says:

“Pardes gahl more saiyan, baith gail bisrai,
Rain amhariya tip tip barse, ris ris jiya risay”
(going to a distant land, my husband has forgotten me,
It rains night and day, so does my heart)

In another song the woman complains:

“Chhaure mahinva kahike gaile kalkatwa
Beet gaile barah baris se videswa”
( you promised to return after six months from Calcutta but its
been twelve years now that you are in the foreign land)

the woman complains that she has been forgotten by the husband, there is a possibility that he has got married to another woman, it has been twelve years and the husband has not returned.

Bhikari Thakur, the “shakespeare of Bhojpuri literature” has contributed a lot to the literature of migration by writing stories, plays and folk songs. Some of his famous works include Bedesiya
(the migrated one), Beti-Bechwa (seller of the daughter), Bidhwa-Bilaap (wailing of the widow) etc. Most of his work is a take on ill practices affecting women in the society.

One can’t ignore the contribution of Bhojpuri cinema songs in bringing the pain of the “left wives” to the larger population. Singers like Kalpana, sarda Sinha, Devi, sadhna, have sung songs which talks of migration of the husbands. Devi sings:

“Jab aae holi Diwali, tu le aio chunri laali,
Chunri na laio to na laio, sajan rajdhani pakad ke aa jaio,”

(please come home when the festival of holi, and Diwali comes
And don’t forget to get red color scarf for me, if you are
Not able to get it, it is fine but please do come,
board the fastest train Rajdhani and come)

The woman in the song is requesting her husband to come for the festival of Holi and Diwali, bring her gifts but if he is not able to bring anything it is fine but he must come.

Malini Awasthi sings:

“Railiya bairan piya ko liye re , jaune sahabwa ke
Saiyan more naukar, goli dagai ghayal kar jae re,
Jaune sawadwa pe sainya mora reejhe, khae
Dhathura saut baurai re, railiya bairan”

( this bitch railway train is taking my husband away from me,
A gun should fire and injure the man under whom my husband works,
Those women who tempt my husband must eat Dhathura and get lost)

The woman in the song is cursing the railway train which is carrying her husband to the city away from her, she wants the man under whom her husband works to get out of the way. She is insecure about the fact that her husband might get lured by the women in the city, therefore all such women must eat dhathura, (an intoxicating plant substance) get intoxicated and forget her husband.

Kalpana sings:

“Jaem naukri pe abhiye se na kahi ye balam ji
Gahre chutti leke aure kuch din rahie balamji
Bada din pe aile bus dui char din la, tarsela sejiya
Balam ankhaya me neend la”
(dear husband please do not go for work, take a leave and stay at home
for some more days, you have come after such a long time,
our bed is waiting for us to be able to sleep on it)
in the following lines, the wife is requesting the husband to stay for some more time, not to go
for work so soon, he has come after a long time and it has been only few days that he is here. She
has been sleepless and her bed is waiting for both of them to sleep.

In all the songs and other songs which I came across, I found similar concerns. And these included,
complaints about access to resources getting curtailed in the absence of the husband, emotional,
sexual and physical torment by the male family members and the neighbors, expression of sexual
desire by women, folk songs complained about men not bringing their wives to home to
consummate their marriage, desire to become mother, ill treatment by in-laws, financial
difficulties they face in order to run their family, cattle and agricultural expenses, fear of their
husbands marrying other woman where they have migrated.

Those women who go out and work (which is just 14%) face sexual harassment, at their work
place and get paid very low wages as compared to men. In my village, kumar, in the district of
jamui in Bihar, people do not talk openly about the sexual harassment of women but in the closed
doors such talks are very common. There have been several instances of lower caste women
workers getting physically exploited by upper caste men. There is also a difference of around 50
to 100 Rupees in the wages paid to women.

conclusion

The nature of suffering of women remains same, it is only the means which vary. It is very hard
to digest the absence of women in the narrative of migration in the context of Bihar. There are
many newspaper reports which talk about the causes of migration, changing numbers and figures
of the migration, the employment status of the population, how and why Bihari migrants are
important for the cities, or are they parasites for the city? Bihari migrants are the talk of the town
but the discussion revolves around only the mentioned questions and women are missing from
such narratives. If one looks at the history of migration, one does not find women in it, I have
tried to fill this blank space and give an alternate history of Bihari women. By my research of the
folktales I have tried to give a picture of life of women, how they suffer in the absence of the
husband.