

The changing role of women



Gender inequality is one of the enormous puzzles of contemporary society. In last several decades, a significant alteration has happened in higher education throughout much of the industrialized world. For the first time in history, females are completing their educational studies more than males are. However, the university majors are still highly gender separated. Nonetheless, the creation of women's studies programs at university level helps women to reach the gender equality. Also women have to overcome many restrictions connected with the business issues. Despite the fact, that in general, women participation in the Fortune 500 board seats has grown, on the average, the rate of increase is quite slow. Moreover the wage gap and the glass ceiling issues are still exist. Furthermore gender disparity in family remains an issue, despite the fact that the inequality has shifted and became less pronounced in the family life.

Keywords: gender inequality in education, college majors, women's studies, sex disparity in business, Fortune 500, wage gap, glass ceiling, gender inequality in family, households, children's gender, child custody.

Gender Inequality: The Changing Role of Women throughout the Last 30 Years in U. S.

Gender inequality is one of the enormous puzzles of contemporary society. Gender inequality refers to the unequal perceptions of individuals according to their gender. Males and females are unequal in every possible way in infinite circles, both immediate and enduring, by both objective aspect and subjective practice. Thus, what we can count as gender inequality? Can we

describe it in methods that let us surely and fairly assess when there is more or less of it?

Gender disparity occurs in the all areas of modern world. Education, business and family evoke the enormous amount of controversy in terms of gender disparity. Gender inequality in education has received significant consideration during recent years from researchers and educators. There are three main points that describe the gender inequality in education: preponderance of women who graduate from university compared to number of men, gender gap in terms of college majors and creation of women's studies. Although women overcame many restrictions connected with the business issues, however the gender gap in the managing positions, wage gap and glass ceiling are still exist. Moreover, gender disparity within the family remains an issue. Despite the fact, that women and men try to share all households, eventually females still doing more than males. Also the sex disparity appears in the perception of child's gender. In addition, the decision-making that refers to children's custody after divorce shows the changing tendency that connected with gender inequality. Gender roles: are they really changing?

Gender inequality in education

In last several decades, a significant alteration has happened in higher education throughout much of the industrialized world. For the first time in history, females are completing their educational studies more than males are. Up until the 1990's, men have surpassed women in the number of undergraduate and graduate degrees that were completed in US. Since the 1990's, women have begun to attain greater equality with men and, in many

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cases, have exceeded men in regards to their educational achievement. According to a recent study by the U. S. Congress, females are now prospering as well as, or better than, males on many of the indicators of educational achievement. Interestingly, the huge gaps in educational achievement between males and females that once prevailed have been generally eradicated. In the United States, women currently earn 67 percent of all bachelor's degrees. In a recent study McDaniel(2010) found that the demographics were that 61 percent Hispanics, 61 percent Native Americans, 54 percent Asians, and 57 percent White females attained college. Changing educational achievement rates for men and women could reinforce gender gaps in salary, the involvement of women in the labor force, and a huge variety of other labor market issues. The increasing ratio of college-educated women compared to men could change social tendencies in marriage: more women delay marriage, divorce or completely deny marriage. As we can see now, the traditional roles of woman are being altered because of the impact of educational access for women.

The tendency for increasing numbers of women in higher education should explain not only how females have caught up to males in graduating from college, but also why the female percentage of the population surpassed and continues to increase as compared to the male rate for college graduation. Researchers have looked at sociological and economic ways that the study of educational achievement has evolved. The significance of women increasing their educational opportunities shows in changes in the labor market, where women need to have a higher degree than men to have an equal wage, or the goal to develop their special skills and talents. The second determinant

of educational achievement is access to resources. The numerous studies confirmed that family-based financial, social, and cultural resources all play an important role in educational attainment (McDaniel, 2010).

Research has begun to concentrate on a female's advantage in education in the United States, but it is necessary to emphasize that women's rising tendency of graduation does not mean that the parity in the area of education has finally been reached. University majors are still highly gender separated. In most cases, women choose fields of study which usually bring in less money. The fields that are predominated by men are engineering, law, medicine, natural science and mathematics. The majors that are predominated by women are nursing, social science, teaching, and the humanities. The variety in choices of university majors between males and females is highly striking. In 2007-2009, among recipients of bachelor's degrees in the United States, 13% of women majored in education compared to 4% of men, and only 4% of women majored in engineering compared to 14% of men (Evertsson et al., 2009).

Unfortunately, in different "men's majors" women face the problem of gender inequality that connected with the gender perception. The sex differences in choice of major have recently been at the top of disputes on the reasons behind women's under-representation in science and engineering (Evertsson et al., 2009). Females are still considered as being less capable in succeeding in mathematics and natural sciences than males. However, the gender gap in math and science achievement tests is quite insignificant. It is also known that the gender gap has been declining over the past 20 years.

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One more important change that is connected to gender inequality in education is the creation of women's studies programs at university level. Since the first women's studies program was founded in the 1969-1970 academic year, over 600 schools have established programs (Carell, Page, & West, 2010). Undoubtedly, the number of women's studies courses has continued to increase, from 449 in 1984, to 626 in 1994. Colleges and universities now offer about 2, 000 women's studies programs (Carell et al., 2010). Today, women's studies are offered in many countries, though the extension of its institutionalization varies widely. The researchers state that the rise in high rate of women's studies has occurred due to the fact that women were always treated as a minority in the society, whose rights have been violated. So now it is considered as a great opportunity to learn about women.

An appraisal of the disciplinary impact of women's studies will necessarily be continuous process, as women's studies and associated academic fields further develop. The researchers state that women's studies majors help females to enhance their feminist consciousness and personal self-esteem. Some researchers also point out that females who take part into women's studies changed their attitude towards the perception of men. Women became more likely to compete with men, despite the existing gender disparity. It's important to expand and develop women's studies in order to displace the harsh oppression often made regarding women and reduce the gender inequality.

Gender disparity in business

One substantial indicator that a society has achieved gender equality would be the existence of approximately equal number of males and females in executive positions. Despite the fact that in Western countries females have far more access to management positions than at any other period in history, equal picture is surely not present. Nonetheless, in recent decades the number of women entering the executive, managerial, or professional ranks in the U. S. has increased. However, these females are concentrated at lower levels of management. Across all economic areas, compared to males, females rarely occupy positions conferring major decision-making authority and the ability to affect others' salary or preferment (Duehr & Bono, 2006).

During the last fifteen years, progression wasn't fast for females in the boards of the largest 500 US firms. The Fortune 500 is the rating of the top 500 United States publicly traded companies as measured by their gross incomes and is compiled per annum by Fortune magazine. Women held 9.6 per cent of the Fortune boards seats in 1995, though by 2011 women held 19 per cent seats (Van Der Lippe, De Ruijter, & Raub, 2011). Despite the fact that in general, women participation in the Fortune 500 board seats has grown, on the average, the rate of increase is quite slow. According to this rate of increase, it may need at least 70 years for women to attain equity with men on Fortune 500 boards. Females' actions can encounter with greater examinations and their performance may be more sharply judged as long as women are not well represented on the board.

In spite of the progression women have made, gender pay parity in the workplace is still a problem. In 1990 women earned only 60 cents for every

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dollar that men earned, implying a “ gender pay gap” of 40 cents (or 40 percent). Although the gender pay gap had stood at roughly that level for decades, the 1995 a striking thing happened: the “ raw” pay gap shrunk rapidly, and it has continued to shrink to this day (Dey & Hill, 2007).

Economists analyze the gender wage gap using wage regressions-that is, statistical analyses specifying the relationship between wages and productivity- related characteristics for men and women (Hoque, DuBois, & Fox- Cardamone, 2010).

The survey concludes that some of the raw wage gap is due to varieties in the measured characteristics of males and females. The gender pay gap has become an essential attribute of the U. S. workstation and is so wide spread that many people believe that it is normal. In most fields college-educated females still earn less than their male co-workers earn, despite the equal working conditions that connected with hours, occupation, parenthood, and other factors that are normally associated with payment system. Women tend to work in the nonprofit and local government areas, where salaries are statistically lower than those in the for-profit and federal government areas (Hoque et al., 2010). The pay parity is particularly a question of fairness. Women don't have enough resources to provide themselves and feed their families, when they are paid less compared to men for equal work. A lot of women experience deficiency in terms of savings as a result of the wage gap, especially when they retire (Van Der Lippe et al., 2011). The pay inequality is an obstacle for females' opportunity to negotiate in the workstation. Most couples tend to prioritize the higher-earning husband's

well-being in child care, selection of residence, and other household decisions, because women earn less.

The term ‘ glass ceiling’ was used in 1984 by the author of the ‘ Corporate Woman’ column in The Wall Street Journal to describe the process in the work area in USA and other countries. This author reported that an invisible obstacle serves to prevent all but a disproportionately few females from reaching the highest levels of the corporate hierarchy, oblivious of their achievement and merits (KepHeart & Schumacher, 2005). Researchers state that the glass ceiling in corporate America shows a few cracks now, but it is still firmly in place. The point is that the glass ceiling is not a hurdle for a person based on an individual’s failure to cope with a higher-level job. It refers to females as a group who are kept from promoting because they are women. Unfortunately, many women who plan their promotion and expect high work positions may not be promoted not because they can’t handle the higher-level job, but because they are women. This refers to a special kind of gender discrimination connected with the working area. Many researchers also report that despite the ‘ glass ceiling’ there is one more hurdle for female leaders today. That is the peculiar wall that exists at the top, in other words when women succeed in the process of the destruction of strong ‘ glass ceiling’, then she face another barrier, which is the brick wall between their success and the traditional male hierarchies on the other side. Sometimes as a result, women are choosing to leave the workplace on their own consent, to participate only in family matters, or because they do not want the burden of the leader positions.

Actually, women choose to leave corporate America, not so much because of the obvious obstacles previously outlined, but because they choose to establish their own businesses. In fact, the foundation of the owning a business is a very prosperous way of avoiding the “ glass ceiling” concepts. Researchers state that 23% of the women interviewed providing disillusionment with the “ glass ceiling” as the incentive for establishing their own businesses, also between 1997 and 2008, the number of women-owned companies increased by 19 % nationally, in addition, since 1999 there has been a 190 % increase in construction businesses and a 130 % increase in manufacturing businesses started by women (Terjesen, Sealy, & Singh, 2009). Moreover, over 2. 46 trillion dollars in commerce are generated from female owned businesses. Females are also owners of 12. 6 million privately held and majority owned corporations (Terjesen et al., 2009). It’s impressive that women serve as employers to 19. 5 million employees; it means that the quarter of all employees work for a woman entrepreneur. These indexes prove the tremendous shift in direction of women entrepreneurship as the chosen approach to crack through the ‘ glass ceiling’.

Sex inequality within family

During the last decades women’s responsibilities within the family have changed a lot. Therefore, gender inequality acquired a new form due to participation of women in the labor force. The researchers claim that women’s employment leads to more equal participation regarding households. Presently, females don’t have enough free time to participate in a household as before. Thus, gender inequality has shifted and became less pronounced in the family life.

Actually, it took a lot of efforts for women to acquire the same status as men have today. There are two aspects that underlie this change. The first aspect is connected to the women's position of power that she reached as a result of getting independent income. Women now have access to money resources, the opportunity to negotiate the allocation of responsibilities and tasks and became an important and reputable participant in the process of the decision making within the household (Minques, 2012). The second one refers to the female's limitation of free time that led to the increase of men's participation in child care and other activities connected with the household. However, researchers state that the disproportional share of the burden of household still exists. Females are assigned more labor-intensive and time-consuming chores. Despite the increase of male's participation in a household, men tend to be responsible for familial obligations that take less time and concentration (Minques, 2012). It means that in spite of the fact that men share the households with their spouses, women still spend a lot of time doing their domestic duties.

Another factor that shows the gender inequality within the family is connected to the gender of children. In spite of the statement that the contemporary families are less concerned about gender of their children and tend to have one child of each sex parents still have some preferences. Dahl and Moretti (as cited in Raley and Bianchi, 2006) argues that a number of pieces of evidences suggests that there continues to be a preference for sons, at least among fathers in the United States. For instance, they investigated that couples with two daughters proceed to a third birth than

those with two sons. The researchers consider this finding as consistent with a preference for boys over girls.

Whether or not parents have a preference in terms of gender of their child, they subconsciously set more hopes on boys than girls. Given past gender differences in adult economic achievements, parents may assume that one gender, most often sons, will have higher economic achievement in adulthood (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). In spite of the fact that a lot of couples emphasize that girls will be caregivers for them in the future, parents also suppose that their sons will help them financially, while daughters will spend most of the time in their own families doing households and taking care of children. The presumption that girls will devote the life to their own families as caregivers leads to another area in which couples seem to differentiate the involvement in house-work activities by sex (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). Although parents state that they allocate chores equally, girls do more household work overall. Because girls do more feminine households like cooking and cleaning and boys do more masculine chores as household repairs and outdoor works, it's obvious that daughters will do more chores, because cleaning and cooking is a kind of everyday activity, what we can't say about repair.

It is an obvious fact that during the long time in US gender inequality in terms of custody of children after parent's divorce was in favor of women. However, that tendency has endured a huge surge of changes 25 years ago. National estimates in the 1970's and 80's indicated that women had sole custody of the children approximately 85% of the time, and men retained sole custody 10% of the time, with the remaining 5% spread over a variety of

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custody arrangements, including grandparent, split or joint custody (Kalmijn, 2007). The rights of males in this issue has increased and changed for the better over time. Affected by fathers' complaints of gender discrimination in custody decisions, constitutional concerns for parity protection, the feminist movement, and the entry of large numbers of females into the labor market, most states had replaced the standards that were based on the gender.

Women lost one of their few benefits that refer to gender inequality. The researchers state that the fact that women became more independent and anxious about their career played not a good role for child custody decision-making. In 1980, 2. 9 million mothers got sole custody of their children; by 1995 that situation had almost tripled. Nevertheless, by 2007 the number of fathers with sole custody increased by 4 times, while the number of mothers who got the sole custody decreased (DeGermo, Patras, & Eap, 2008).

Although the number of mothers who have the sole custody substantially prevails, the number of fathers who get the sole custody of children unceasingly grows.

Despite all the changes and reforms, gender inequality still exists. Women are trying to avoid many obstacles that they face on their way to success and power. Unfortunately, women need to prove their capabilities in all areas much harder than men do and it does not matter if it is an education, or business, or family scope. Today women still face the gender inequality in terms of leadership positions, pay gap and glass ceiling. They also are unequal with men in area of different college majors and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, due to tremendous efforts, the gender disparity gave a crack in point of women's attendance to college and

establishment of women's studies programs. It is well known that the modernity is a time of change and it is obvious that change in gender inequality will continue. But the question is how much time and efforts it will take and will we be satisfied with the results that we will finally receive?