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ENGL 1121-25

11 September 2023

### Living in a Man's World

Despite countless examples of women excelling in the workplace, the persistent myth that 'women can't handle it' still lingers, holding back progress and potential. Regardless of the significant progress in gender equality, there are still many instances where some men hold the misconception that women are incapable of certain tasks in the workplace. Stereotypes persist in the workplace, with some men holding biased beliefs that women are incapable of excelling in certain roles or tasks, hindering women's opportunities for success in the workplace. Women are held back in the workplace by wage disparities, harassment, the belief that women are incapable of excelling in the workplace, and the bias against women receiving promotions. The truth is that women are just as capable as men in the workplace and overall, anywhere. Men often assume that women are not as strong as men and are incapable of lifting heavy objects. Although men have anatomical advantages regarding physical strength, women possess the mental strength to train themselves and achieve physical strength equal to that of a man. I am employed in a warehouse, and I've witnessed similar situations both personally and among my colleagues. I started my position at this warehouse during the summer months, and upon my initial arrival, I received disapproving looks from nearly every male present in the room. On my third day on the job, I was tasked with operating the reach forklift truck to retrieve pallets from the upper reaches of the warehouse. I distinctly recall the moment when I sensed all eyes fixed upon me. It wasn't

just a matter of my uncertainty regarding the task's success; it was also the fact that approximately 100 people were observing, all uncertain of my potential success. Amidst this atmosphere of skepticism and numerous individuals expressing doubt about my abilities to accomplish the task, I drew inspiration from a remarkable woman, my great-grandmother Marcia. She was one of the resilient women who tirelessly stood at a table for twelve hours each day, inspecting and preparing eggs for the soldiers during World War II. She persisted in her duties despite receiving the heart-wrenching news that her husband had lost his life in the war. Women like her are the foundation of our modern world, capable of enduring heartbreak and still persevering for the greater good. With my great-grandmother's unwavering strength in mind, I successfully managed to retrieve all the pallets, leaving that challenging moment behind as I continued with my day, a sense of accomplishment washing over me, and the satisfaction of proving everyone wrong. This provides a deeper understanding of what women must deal with in the workplace and the misconceptions that men place on us. It was not until I showed that I could move and lift heavy things that I gained an ounce of respect from the men in my workplace, I was just another woman who would quit in a week to them.

In addition to this, gender disparities in the workplace manifest themselves in various ways, such as unequal pay, limited access to leadership positions, and gender-based stereotypes that diminish women's abilities. These biases not only insinuate that women are less capable, but they also obstruct women's career progression. My mother, an incredibly hard-working woman, served as a financial advisor for one of the most successful companies in the country. She dedicated herself to long and grueling hours each day, aspiring to advance in her career and earn a promotion. Within the branch of the company where she was employed, there were four owners, both fathers and their sons. Troublingly, there were multiple occasions when the

authorities had to intervene due to violent altercations among these owners, which also resulted in harm to other employees. In the midst of a police investigation into the company's affairs, one of the employees with a senior position in the company faced legal consequences, leaving a vacant position for a promotion that my mother had hoped to move into for years. Despite her unwavering commitment to the company, this position was not granted to her. Instead, it was awarded to a man who had started his position only a week prior to this incident. Women who have worked in a workplace for years, putting in 2x the effort that men do, rarely get positions that allow them to move up and become a person of importance to the company.

Furthermore, women face a higher likelihood of workplace harassment, including verbal, physical, and sexual forms. In addition to gender-based discrimination that questions their ability to perform tasks on par with men, women must also handle the added burden of workplace harassment. During my first job ever, I faced numerous unsettling situations where men made inappropriate comments toward me. These instances include men claiming they were going to kidnap me, falsely accusing me of being an FBI agent to make suggestive remarks about me handcuffing them, being asked to be a man's personal stripper, and one individual even threatening to wait for me outside after my shift, effectively preventing me from safely reaching my car. These comments and behaviors were directed at me solely because I was a woman in the workplace. When I brought these distressing experiences and my concerns to the attention of my male managers, I was shocked by their response. They dismissed my concerns, suggesting that as a 14-year-old girl working at a grocery store, I should expect such behavior because I was a "pretty girl." This response left me deeply disappointed and unsettled. Women are more susceptible to being sexually harassed in the workplace compared to their male counterparts. Data reveals that in the transportation industry, where women make up less than 25% of the

workforce, they were 10 times more inclined to report incidents of sexual harassment than the men working in the same industry.

Additionally, women are less likely to be promoted in the workplace in comparison to their male counterparts. Frequently, we observe men receiving promotions in the workplace, even when women possess greater experience and better qualifications for the position. This disparity in leadership representation primarily stems from societal biases and perceptions concerning women in leadership roles. Throughout my career, I've never been employed at a company where a woman held the highest executive position. While I have worked in roles where women served as managers or even held positions higher than managerial roles, I've never had the opportunity to witness a woman in the ultimate leadership role within a company. This is devastating, considering women often possess extensive qualifications for positions of power, and research consistently highlights the positive outcomes associated with female-led companies. Nonetheless, it remains a common trend that men consistently occupy the highest positions of power within an organization. During my two initial jobs, both in grocery stores, I worked under male leadership. In both these instances, the male leaders lacked the authority to address employee issues and encourage them to uphold the company's reputation, ensuring they didn't become a source of embarrassment to the company. Both stores experienced a higher rate of reported thefts by employees compared to customer-related incidents. Moreover, both stores had a concerning prevalence of workplace harassment, with no effective measures taken to address these issues. Consequently, both stores saw a significant decline in their ratings, plummeting by more than 60%. Women are eager to invest the effort required to attain and sustain influential roles within a company, yet they often find themselves overlooked. On the other hand, men

frequently receive positions of power without much scrutiny, and sometimes struggle to maintain them.

Despite the numerous challenges women encounter in the workplace, including wage disparities, workplace harassment, the enduring stereotype of their inability to perform on the same level as men, and the bias against them in positions of authority, women exhibit resilience and continue to excel in their professional roles every day. I am still in the process of educating myself about the various types of workplace discrimination against women. During my research for this essay, a significant revelation was the wage disparity, with women earning approximately \$3.75 less per hour than their male coworkers. In the words of Tupac, “And since we all came from a woman, got our name from a woman, and our game from a woman. I wonder why we take from our women; do we hate our women?”