Chapter 5

Gender Bias

(In this chapter I present the findings drawn from the interviewee responses (supported by the verbatim quotes of the interviewees), and the statistical analysis of the responses to the questionnaire regarding gender bias. Layder’s Model will be used as a framework to present and discuss the findings. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.)

5.1 Introduction

The Indian woman is on the threshold of redefining herself. The emerging economy, not only affords many opportunities, but also changes social perceptions regarding her role in society, both of which can be to her advantage (Budhwar et al., 2005). India is a land of paradoxes. It struggles with extremes - female infanticide and illiteracy on one hand; women presidents, and woman CEOs on the other hand. The feminine principle is worshipped as Goddess in India and yet the Indian woman is the victim of the abuses of an inherently patriarchal social system (Nath, 2000). The contrast between her social realities stimulates the need for change. The growing trend of education and employment among women also adds to this stimulus (Bumiller, 1991).

One arena, in which the process of redefinition and reclamation of power ought to take place, is the formal organization. The wider socio-cultural beliefs,
attitudes and conflicts play themselves out even in organizations and so they present an ideal set up to study the pattern in which gender biases arise, are faced, and managed. The women in corporations have to perforce come to an understanding about their identity, and status in the organization. They have to come to terms with their feminine and masculine self to effectively compete and succeed in an organization which has a predominance of masculine culture (Koprowski, 1983).

Despite many efforts to promote women through equal opportunities and pro-women policies, gender barriers are present in India Incorporation (Sandhu & Mehta, 2007). According to the World Economic Forum report, India ranks 128 out of 134 countries on the parameter of involving women and giving opportunities for their growth. India Incorporation has fewer women at the top. Only 11% of 240 companies have women CEOs (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010). At the very top level where the funnel becomes narrower, and the number of women who scale the organizational height are few, gender bias is understood and faced differently by the women executives. A deeper understanding of how these biases operate and are perceived, will go a long way in helping organizations in improving gender ratios and creating an inclusive culture in organizations (Schein, 1978).

Gender biases are subtle, invasive and difficult to contend with. They are compared to a labyrinth of pressures that force executive women to opt out (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Gender biases are complex because they are created by many factors like social and cultural attitudes, organizational culture, leadership values, and individual reactions to gender issues (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; K. Miller, 2009; Castilla & Benard, 2010). The benefits of ‘diversity and inclusion’ initiatives in organizations, in order to overcome these biases, and create a more conducive work environment are well researched and documented (V. Gupta, 2009). However, increasing diversity by employing more women and promoting them is not the same as managing diversity. Diversity in practice needs a change in social mind-set which happens over time. An organization can facilitate it, but cannot hasten it. Besides, excessive importance to women
issues can not only seem cosmetic, but also become lopsided and defeat the overall purpose of gender equity. Positive and holistic change demands that the gender studies also focus on similarities and not only differences between genders to create a super ordinate culture that benefit both sexes (Metz & Simon, 2008). For this purpose an understanding about the prevalence and perception of bias is important.

The second, main aim of this study is to understand gender bias in corporate India. The research questions posed in this regard and the findings of the survey and the interview follow.

5.2 Research Questions

The two main research questions that inform the study on gender bias as experienced by women executives in India are-

- Is there gender bias in Indian Organisations?

- What is the nature of gender bias (discrimination) against women executives in India?

- What are some of the other organizational and social prejudices that executive women face in India?

- How do they cope with the subtle barriers at their workplace? How does their agency operate?

Since subtle biases are difficult to ascertain and pinpoint, semi structured interview is used to gather detailed information. The respondents were given a description of each bias identified in gender research and were asked if they have encountered them in their career. They were also asked about their methods of dealing with them? A list of the subtle biases, with the brief description and the interview questions are given below. This is followed by a section presenting the verbatim responses given by women executives. The identity of every
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respondent is coded into a number to maintain anonymity. The responses are categorized according to the domains specified by Layder’s model.

5.2.1 Questions Regarding Bias in the Interview Schedule

The actual questions which were posed to women executives and the bias which they seek to collect rich data about are described below.

1. **Heroic Masculinity** - Heroic Masculinity refers to a culture which emphasizes achievement over nurturance. It is a culture which measures capability in terms of quantitative measures (hours spent at work, mobility, visibility, profits made, etc.) and ignores qualitative measures (team skills, communication, communal and pro-social activities).

   INTERVIEW QUESTION-Is there a predominance of male values in your organization?

2. **Think Manager-Think Male** - Leadership is always associated with men and so women leadership is considered out of place. Men react when a women manager exercises authority and outsiders also prefer to negotiate with a man as compared to a woman.

   INTERVIEW QUESTION- Leadership is always associated with men and so is women leadership seen oddly? Are people surprised when they see a woman manager? Do they expect/prefer to see a man?

3. **Tokenism** - Being the only woman makes others react in stereotypical ways in meetings and in other interactions. Women who don’t conform to gender ascribed roles receive criticism and this is generalized to the entire sex. Such generalizations further consolidate the perceived risk of promoting women.

   INTERVIEW QUESTION - Does your being the only woman make others react in stereotypical ways?
4. **Cultures of Advantage** - Men have greater access to a large network of contacts, informal groups, are usually better at gathering support for their views or interests as compared to women.

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Men, who have greater access to contacts, informal groups, are usually better at gathering support for their views or interest as compared to women. Do you agree? How does it impact your career?

5. **Devaluation** - Constant devaluation and giving women a secondary role in family and society reduces the degree of self-confidence women have.

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Does the devaluation of women contribute to their lack of self-confidence and lack of assertion? Have you felt devalued, ignored, or subtly put down, simply because you are a woman?

6. **Double Bind** – The adoption of a masculine style of management elicits complaints and feminine style makes people dismiss women managers. (Communal qualities are expected and so agentic qualities are condemned)

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Did you ever feel that the masculine style of management elicits complaints and feminine style of management makes people dismiss you?

7. **Homophily** – Top level perceives hiring a woman as a riskier decision than hiring a man. There is a tendency of preferring people who resemble themselves, i.e. men prefer to hire men and if they deviate from this they have to face peer pressure from colleagues.

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Do men at the top perceive hiring/promoting a woman as a riskier decision than hiring a man? Is there a tendency of preferring people who resemble themselves? What would your preference be while hiring people?

8. **Attributing Sex as Reason for Success** - There is a backlash from others when a woman is more successful than a man. Women have to face
derogatory backbiting or nicknames in chat rooms. Women are suspected of using ignoble means when they succeed.

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Is there backlash from others when a woman is more successful than a man? Do women face derogatory backbiting or nicknames in chat rooms, more than men do?

9. Cinderella Complex - Women have a tendency to wait to be rescued. They use feminine wiles to get their job done.

INTERVIEW QUESTION - Is it true that women have a tendency to wait to be rescued? Do they use feminine wiles to get their work done? Have you ever used such tactics?

5.3 Research Methodology - Gender Bias

The data from interviews forms the bulk of information about gender bias in India as experienced by women executives in corporate careers. The responses to the questionnaire reveal the extent of their prevalence in corporate India. Layder’s model is used to classify and layer the factors which affect women executives. The perceived impact of these biases and the actions taken to cope with them as reported by women executives are reported verbatim. The response of each woman executive is coded with a number. The degree of internalization of these biases and the sense of agency exhibited by women executives is later discussed in Chapter 6, using Bourdieu’s theory of ‘habitus’ and McNay’s ‘Performative agency’. The context, the setting, the situated activity and the self of Layder’s model, interpreted in terms of gender bias, is presented in a diagram. (Figure 5.1)

5.4 Context

The context in this study refers to the real domain, the underlying structures which trigger events. They are macro factors like gender, socio-cultural history
Figure 5.1: Gender bias layered in Layder’s model
and globalization, etc., which play out their influences on the setting and actors. While macro factors are actually an amalgam of many more factors, which trigger biases and inequity, I am limiting it to two prominent structures found in Indian society:

‘patriarchal cultures’ and ‘role stereotyping’. These have a direct bearing on the subtle discrimination that women face in organizations.

5.4.1 Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to the ‘rule of the father/patriarch’. It also refers to relationship between women and men wherein men have a dominant position and women have a subjugated position. Unlike biological theory, sociological theory believes patriarchy results due to social constructs which are propagated in each generation. Though traditional societies carry the heaviest imprint of patriarchy, modernization and globalization have countered and modified it. Women are now educated, allowed to enter employment. This changes the degree of male domination on their lives but by no means emancipates them. Besides, this empowerment is true for a small denomination of women, compared to the vast majority, who still live in the shackles of poverty, illiteracy, caste barriers, and religious superstitions (Bumiller, 1991). Even among those who have had advantages of acquiring social capital, gender messages are conveyed by family, institutions and media and in subtle ways the male domination continues (Sarshar, 2010). In India, caste system, religion, economic status have further compounded the gender issue. As a result varied types of social inequities are created. However in all of them the dominance of men continues (Chakravarti, 2006). Patriarchal structures percolate through all institutions and express in the form of subtle biases which executive women have to contend with in their social and organizational setting. Deference to men (father or husband) is taught and women internalize it.

(11 - Yes, I would always think of my family first. I would never take a decision which will go against my family. My husband does not feel the same.)
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He won’t even ask me about my feelings. For example, today if I know that my husband has a holiday and he is at home, I would love to take a holiday, but if he knows I have a holiday and he has office, he will go to office. It doesn’t matter for him. He will stay only if it is a holiday. Otherwise he will not be at home. I will do my duty and that is the way I have seen my mother doing. We are moulded like that from our childhood - we are women, we have to do this, we have to adjust, we have to give.....

In organizations they take the form of heroic masculine culture that precludes recognizing agentic activities which women are considered good at. Tokenism and the bias of ‘Think manager, Think male’ and attributing gender as a reason why women become leaders are some of the forms of subtle bias. Bias exists in the mind set of individuals and gets reinforced through ‘Homophilly’ – the tendency to hire people who are similar. Male Homophilly further excludes women at top levels. Olsson, (2000) says that heroic masculinity in organizations is supported by organizational myths and stories which are vehicles of communication to support organizational goals and provide role models. Meritocracy is an impact of the masculine paradigm. The price of membership is silence or conformity. She says that an archetype of leadership is not a style, which is a reflection of an individual personality, but the social construction. This can put great pressure on women to conform to the masculine paradigm. Over a period of time these biases are internalized. A respondent talks about why women may have lesser confidence and are more risk averse than their male counterparts-

(86-You are really a function of your upbringing. As a girl you could have had instances where you wanted to do something and people held you back. Yes, in small town versus metro it could happen with the boy also, then if you are from a very humble service class and if your parents hold you back from taking entrepreneurial decision, I think it does affect you. More than a boy, a girl in our society, because what will happen is that probably the girl will have to live with those sorts of decisions, but a man may actually move out of house. If I have to talk about myself I think this was not a problem. But, it could also be
because of other factors, you can take risk if your husband is supportive, you can take risk if your family circumstances are XYZ, so I don’t think confidence and risk taking ability will develop so easily without adequate support.) Speaking in a similar vein, another interviewee graphically describes the organizational bias that women face while vying for top positions in organizations.

(49- “I think there are certain perceptions which are being carried in organizations, about women because of the traditional gender roles. The perception is that women lack confidence and they lack the experience and women need not be compensated as much as men, they need a lot of guidance and mentoring, it is better to put them in support roles, it is better to put them in staff positions. I think these are again perceptions which have been around women and they have been there for a very long time. They have been broken. I think what women bring to the table today, and I am speaking for myself, is power of motivation, power of good communication, high quality work. I think in terms of strategic planning and analysis women are equal or maybe better than men (and that is my view). So those myths are still there but a few women have broken that myth and those are the women who have gone up because of their own self effort. I don’t think the environment has supported the women so much. It is self-belief that has helped her to move up, so this concept of glass ceiling all these are myths. We have just punctured the glass ceiling. Those 10-15 or 1%-2% of women who have come on top are absolutely on their own, they have done it on their own. I think that is the only way, as more and more women come up in the field, it will be an influencing factor for many.”)

(96- “That is the male perception I would say, because they don’t like to report to a woman. It is a general tendency, it has come up in our culture. So, for that culture to break maybe it will take some more years, when more women come to the top.”)

(44- “It depends on the culture of the organization. There are places where they constantly crib and pass sarcastic comments about women and all that. So if culture of the organization is such that, all this is not encouraged, and women are looked at as equal, there is no issue of bias.”) Patriarchal cultures also
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have rigid role definitions and this creates stereotypes. Social constructs define masculine and feminine roles and challenging them has repercussions.

5.4.2 Stereotype

Stereotypes are commonly held beliefs about men and women. They are considered as mutually exclusive groups and there are prescriptive norms about how the group members have to behave. They also form the basis on which people are judged, consciously or unconsciously (Kelan, 2008). Family plays an important role in ordering and reinforcing the gender based social hierarchal system among children. The boys learn to be dominating and aggressive and girls learn to be caring, loving, and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are not only social constructs but also get internalized by both men and women. These stereotypes create a given structure, which have to be faced by women executives in organizations.

(99- “When I got this job I walked into the office I had somebody there mumble and grumble about me snatching a breadwinner’s job! The breadwinner is a male not female; females are meant to be at home, cooking. So you know at the beginning to gain acceptance I had to work harder at my job whereas a male colleague coming in would not have had such a problem, because I was overcoming the whole thing about being a woman to start with and then taking on my managerial role.”)

(99- “In fact the same guy who said this, he had 2 daughters the 3rd he announced, if it is a boy he would take us to a 5 star hotel for dinner whereas if it was a girl there was nothing and I seriously objected to that. I said what nonsense is this, a baby is a baby, why not celebrate the birth of another girl? What is wrong with a girl?”)

(21- “As you enter the organization, the first perception is that of stereotypes. One of the stereotypes for example is that you know you want to succeed in the organization, you can’t have children and you can’t have a family life, you need to be married to the organization. I am against that stereotype because I have a
family. I think stereotype of all types exists, you could then say this person is a South Indian and that person is from the North; that is a state based stereotype. So stereotypes exist everywhere.

(35- “My company is a progressive company, they respect women, there are lot of things which are pro-women, but the same people can’t they make a woman, a head? How many women managers we have? 2 or 3 in an almost going to be 80+ hotel company, and then certain functions or jobs they somehow get branded like we do in films, you do only this kind of a role- a heroine or a romantic role and so on, similarly some of the stereotyping of professions and functions exist. I don’t think they should be there. I keep questioning them I say ’why can’t an Executive Housekeeper of a hotel be made a General Manager, till now you have not made any woman a General Manager, so what is this progress you are all talking about’, (an HR person has reached atleast a division level HR head) but a housekeeper or a front office lady has not become a manager!”

(24- “So you will really see, in a circumstance where a woman is being transferred from one place to the other, which is a good move for her career, the whole family will not move with her. But if the husband moves, the wife generally moves. I think research has also shown, if you interview men, they want working women as wives, but they want them to be in teaching, they want this preferred area of working or even doctors because doctors you can deploy anywhere.”

However, macro forces like modernization, increased education for women, increased aspirations of middleclass and increased employment due to globalization have affected these structural constraints for a section of women. A slow but steady change in attitudes is emphasized by the first generation of corporate women executives who say that it will be much easier for the next generation of executive women.

(34. “Stereotype is because of how roles have been defined over a period of time. What we see as a change, has happened from (possibly) my generation. I remember when I started working I was the first girl in my family to work and I had both my mother’s family and my father’s family expressing strong opinion
on the issue. Why does she need to work, it was almost as if a woman has to work for financial need. Can we not provide for her? So that is the mindset at that time which has changed over a period of time. My mother was the pivotal force, she is 94 now. Just to put it in perspective, in terms of the time, she grew up in Punjab and being literate at her time was Class X. That was like a big thing then. She is very strong and she has a view of her own. Her view is that it is very important to give the right education to girls, educate your daughters better than you educate yourselves. She said a man can do anything and earn, a woman needs to do the right thing to earn. At that age and generation you know, coming from her, this is very forward and then she had the ability to actually execute it against quite a lot of odds. I found her courage phenomenal. In a scenario like that, to tell a girl child look you pursue your career I am with you, is very great. How many people in my time and generation found parents like that? Today there are a lot more, all educated families, unless they really retrograde in their thinking which is a very small proportion. (I come from a small town so I don’t come from a metropolitan center like Mumbai.) Because I grew up in a fairly secluded environment so I feel that these are some of the things that really make a difference to your life and this has changed now. Now, when I see my brothers and I see my cousins, what I notice is that they are doing something or the other. They are studying, they are doing this, they are into their own independent lives which is so different from what I could have imagined, when I was as young as them.”

The biases in the wider setting enter into organizations and create a whole set of constraints for women executives.

5.5 Setting

The setting refers to more immediate environment, like the workplace or home, where women executives face issues. They are not necessarily patterned but nevertheless define the experience. In the organization women contend with organizational cultures which are predominantly masculine. Attitudes of bosses
and peer or employee also contribute to the experience of discrimination. Patriarchal cultures and heroic masculinity in organizations creates certain advantages to men and disadvantages to women. These attitudes form the setting in which a women executive faces specific organizational cultural biases.

5.5.1 Heroic Masculinity

‘Heroic Masculinity’ refers to a culture which emphasizes achievement over nurturance. It is a culture which measures capability in terms of quantitative measures (hours spent at work, mobility, visibility, profits made etc.) and ignores qualitative measures (team skills, communication, communal and prosocial activities). The word ‘heroic’ itself creates images of a lone fighter, achieving despite formidable odds; which is in keeping with the macho, individualistic image celebrated in masculine cultures. This creates an atmosphere of competitiveness and aggression which is not conducive to women. The masculine culture also stereotypes women into a timid, submissive image and is intolerant to women who do not exhibit those qualities (Kanter, 1977). Masculinity in organizations in India is different from that of the west. The Hofstede studies classify India as a masculine culture, where people are assertive, achievement oriented and have distinct roles for men and women; but the impact of its ancient, non-material culture moderates this behaviour. On the scale of ‘collectivism’ India scores 48, proving that social deference will be high in India (Hofstede, 1980; Malach-Pines & Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). Both these findings indicate that women in India will face bias in a different way as compared to their counterparts in the west due to the unique combination of social and cultural factors. The causes that underlie this can be traced to social, economic, cultural, individual, and organizational factors in a broad sense, but when seen circumspectly, they taper down to masculine culture in organizations, and the stereotyping of gender (Rabinowitz, 2007). The masculine culture marginalizes women executives subtly and forces them to opt out (Kanter, 1977). The survey and the interview findings reveal the extent to which heroic masculinity is found
Qualitative Findings

The responses of women executives regarding gender bias of ‘heroic masculinity’ in Indian corporations are classified under three categories. Those that say it exists and describe the forms in which they encounter it; those that say they never experience any discrimination from the organization and find the organizational culture pro women; and those that say it may exist in some organizations based on some individual factors. Finally the women executives also suggest methods to overcome the bias due to the masculine organizational culture. A bird’s eye view of the results is presented in a diagram. (See Figure 5.2)

**Heroic masculinity does not exist in Indian corporate organizations**

More than half of the respondents (60%) say that they do not feel that their organization is predominantly masculine in culture. (01, 07, 32, 42- “No I don’t think the masculine culture exists”). They, in fact feel that the culture is
conducive to career growth of women. (41- “I have always worked with men and I think they - my colleagues, my boss and everybody, have been quite sensitive to the issues concerning women”). (03- “...They encourage women a great deal.”) They did not feel the need to compromise or feel coerced to do certain jobs either. (44- “I don't think just because you are a woman you are relegated to certain jobs or positions”). (86- “I have never had a situation where I was expected to do something which I was not ready to do as a woman”). The women executives outline many reasons for this.

**Organizational Policies are Family Friendly**

Organizations recognize the need to provide employees facilities which provide a better work life balance. This makes the general attitude more people centric. (13- “I am increasingly seeing more instances of situations where people are willing to give the employee that little bit of flexibility.”)

(14-“The culture itself is changed where you are no longer expected to be there from morning to night. If there is work obviously ....... We in fact encourage people to finish their work and go home. We are also trying our best to avoid split shifts because in hospitality industry, especially food and beverage runs on split shifts because the restaurant operates for lunch and dinner. So the staff has to be there. We encourage people do a straight shift so that they don’t have to just hang around and that works for both men and women, but we found that our ladies also stay back as much as is required by them.”)

**Evaluation is Holistic**

When performance appraisal is 360° and employees are rated on various parameters, the soft skills which may be usually unnoticed in masculine organizational cultures are noticed and recognized. So, holistic evaluations overcome bias of rating employees on mere results alone. (50- “In organizations where both performance and behavior is measured and they also separate past results from potential results, heroic masculinity is not really applicable”). (67- “There was an instance where a lady who was doing extremely well, had to just take off because she had some serious health problem. She was out of active work for almost a year, but, when it came to the performance rating, they rated her high.
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She had the potential; she was still capable of doing the job”.

Quality of Work and not Quantity of Work

The focus on quality of work rather than quantity of time spent in the organization, allows women to reschedule their time. This flexibility allows a better balance between work and life. The ‘long hours’ expectation which is found in organizations with masculine culture is thus, overcome. (19-“Today’s organizations do not look at how much time you have spent but they look at what is the quality work you have delivered. As long as you meet your targets, as long as you are able to deliver the way in which the organization expects work... the amount of time spent at work is not an issue”). (45- “In terms of competencies and strengths, and as a culture, the organization doesn’t differentiate”).

Equal Opportunities

Women executives say that they do not perceive any discrimination based on gender either overtly or covertly. (02- “The work culture is not too demanding and it doesn’t differentiate also. They always give equal opportunities to both men and women”). They do not feel the need to conform to a masculine style of management either. (104- “I have been in this organization for several years and I do not feel that I had to use an aggressive style or act contrary to my nature to get work done. I don’t think I needed to push too much-in meetings or even otherwise. Politeness works and people respect you when you deal with them politely”).

Organizations are People Centric

At the time of personal crisis, if the organization stands by its employees, it goes a long way in creating loyalty and commitment. Women executives describe their organizations and bosses as ‘supportive’ during personal crisis. (67- “I can definitely give you instances from my own life, there was a period when I was totally out of active work because I was diagnosed with autoimmune disorder and I was hospitalized, I was in bed, immobile for two months, and at that time I was the only person handling the PMO role with about 80000 people for whom I was responsible. My boss said ‘it is ok, don’t worry about it, just get better, we will figure out, we will do something’”).
(72- “The organization is not running for charity, but there is a lot of consideration. For example a person’s wife was diagnosed with cancer in Mumbai, she didn’t have any relatives in Mumbai, so he was given a transfer immediately to Chennai where they had support”).

**Heroic Masculinity Exists in Indian Corporate Organizations**

Almost 24% of the women executives interviewed in the study feel that heroic masculinity does exist in Indian corporate organizations. (51- “I feel that the current cultural style in the organization is more macho”). (69- “It is there, that I totally agree”). They feel this exists despite efforts put by the management to actively address them. (18- “I think yes if you look at corporations in India, though they do talk about HR taking a lot of care of the people or having excellent HR policies in place, I would put them under that masculine culture”). The reasons for its existence are expressed from two perspectives: the management stance and the employee stance. The women executives look at the bias from a boss’s point of view and this is called as the management stance, and when they look at it as an employee of the organization, at the receiving end of the bias, it is called as the employee stance.

**The Management Stance Regarding Heroic Masculinity**

Some women executives argue that the masculine culture is inevitable in organizations. They say that cut throat competition, the need for high performance and the need to survive through recession demand focus on results to the exclusion of everything else. They feel that the predominance of masculine values is necessary. (31-“Times are changing now. What I saw, some 15 years back, was different. Now everybody is bottom line oriented, reduce staff, and reduce cost. . . . If you are working for companies which are kind of listed in public eye, there are various stake holders to satisfy and there is constant evaluation, then the pressure to deliver is much more. Then the culture automatically changes to a masculine orientation.

(05- “I don’t think the market play allows you to be otherwise. Those values
are gender agnostic, the market play determines how your organization is. If I am in the banking field, banking is a cut throat business, my organizational values, practices; beliefs have to be centered on what my competitive sphere is, because we are all in the business of giving a return to shareholders. If I have to give a return to the shareholder, if I have to make money, my market place is my mantra, and my god, and my temple. What I have to do to be in the market place determines my attitude”).

Other than the market place competition, the increased population in India and the scarcity of commensurate opportunities creates a competitive situation. This attitude enters organizations too. (15- “Also in India, if you specifically compare it with the US or UK, there are more number of people, there is more competition, and that culture comes into the organization as well. That is why the masculine culture will remain in the organization, unless the competition reduces”).

The recession has increased the focus on delivering results. This orientation naturally puts relational and communal issues out of immediate purview. This too can account for the masculine culture in organization.

(59- “After recession the heroic masculinity of organizations has increased and the importance of short term result has given greater importance than long term benefits and therefore performance becomes a greater issue”).

Some executives feel that high performance creates a task oriented drive which may promote a masculine culture. (60- “It must exist in organizations. Performance should be given great deal of importance”). (15- “I seriously don’t think so, because again it is the culture of the organization which promotes high performance and when you promote high performance it may create a masculine culture”).

They feel that the choice of a man over a woman for a job does exist because women have greater responsibility at home. Some jobs require that the person be more available and there a man may be preferred to a woman. So competence alone cannot be the criteria.

(66- “What happens at the end of the day, this availability also matters, one
is the performance, in performance deadlines are there and you have to anyway do it but the other thing is availability. The management can get into the thought process that a man is more available. So that is why the confidence level with men is a little bit higher. Especially, in the recruitment issue they may think twice before hiring a woman.”

The preference for men over women is subtle and may affect overt action but it will not be the only reason guiding the recruitment decision.

(20- “You can’t prevent people from thinking about it, but whether the thought converts into action is a different thing. I mean if I am interviewing a girl who has just got married, I would also think on similar lines that she would be soon going to go on maternity leave, but not that I am not going recruit her on the ground that she is married. I don’t think so.”)

However, they were against special concessions on performance to women. (45- “I think it should be performance driven. Honestly, I am not comfortable if somebody is making concessions like- giving a 10% target to others and a 5% target to a lady.”)

The Employee Stance Regarding Heroic Masculinity

The existence of heroic masculinity is confirmed by some of the women executives saying that it usually manifests in matters such as areas of hours of work, and having family responsibilities. (09- “I do agree that heroic masculinity exists. My boss used to tell me that you are leaving at 5:30, you are leaving at 6, but then I used to argue with him if the work is getting done and I am ensuring that my work is done within the target dates you have given me, then what is the issue? Over a period of time they do agree, if the quality of work is good. . . .”)

(73-“ Yes it is of course there”. For example, in Accounts Department there was one vacancy for which I referred some female candidate. They were not so interested, because the job means extended hours of work and so they were not in favour of a woman candidate for that post!”).

It is also expressed that though flexible hours are given, the nature of work is such that long hours are inevitable. (19- “What happens is that when you are trying to do a good job, the time factor becomes important. It is not that
they are measuring the time, they are measuring the quality, but to deliver that quality, time is taken anyway. So you will find that the hours may be long, but it is not regimentalized. If a man has to work from morning 9 to evening 9 to deliver something, it is not possible for the woman to do it between 10-5, whether she gets the flexibility or not, so she has to work out the time issue for herself”.

They identify stereotyping by leaders as the cause for the bias. The expectations and values of the leader create the culture more than other factors. (11- “While I was working in ****** I did witness this, very heavy male-oriented culture. We were specifically told to hire more male employees. My personal belief through all my experience is that the values that your leadership believes in usually would determine whether the organization would have a masculine culture or not.”)

The bias is expressed in the form of intolerance to commanding, firm and vocal women. They are often put down by labeling them as emotional or aggressive or unfeminine. (100- “You also have a lot of people who are very supportive of women but if anyone of them were to actually have a woman boss they probably can’t handle it”). (52- “They don’t see that as a manager, are you capable of taking tough stand when it is called for and you stand up for what you believe in. Many times in this organization itself I have been called aggressive but I don’t think I am aggressive. I have invariably been called aggressive by men, never by women”.) (87- “I have encountered this – “don’t get emotional” statement from my boss even if it is a rational statement, substantiated with facts!”) (100- “I think it exists. The acceptability quotient sometimes is low for various reasons, one of them being the stereotype of ‘Oh! she is being aggressive’.”) (52- “I went to Chicago for a project and the manager was asking my colleagues if I can cook, in what way it is that relevant to my job? I always used to think that it is biased a male who wants to see a woman in the kitchen. The fact that she is able to stand shoulder to shoulder with him is bothering him at some level.”)

It is also felt that the bias is not propagated by men alone but by women bosses too. (08- “I think it exists. I have worked in many organizations before
and they all have the biases about staying long hours, I have encountered it. In some organizations I have come across women bosses who actually had that kind of an attitude of avoiding women in their team.”)

Women bosses justify their action saying that jobs require toughness and firmness and most women are squeamish. One finds in their narrative an implication that women are suitable for people oriented jobs like customer service or HR. (75- “The industry as a whole is male dominated, but if you look at the offices, there are a fair number of females because a lot of customer service is involved. My office is fully male, in fact I am looking at removing the females from my office because I think it requires a tremendous toughness inside you, and not many ladies are suited for it”.

**Heroic Masculinity May Exist in Indian Corporate Organizations**

Some women executives do not categorically classify their response about the bias of ‘heroic masculinity’ but say that the bias exists under certain circumstances which can be circumvented or overcome in time. (85- “I think it exists everywhere in some degree….”). (56- “I have seen it in other organizations where there is so much of patriarchal attitude, but this organization is very woman friendly.”) (12- “comparatively speaking…. yes, a woman has to prove herself at every stage.”)

(57- “I would say it is somewhat true. In manufacturing industries and investment banking you will find it, in retail and consumer you won’t find it. So it does exist and a lot depends on how the leader thinks about it and whether he/she is actually actively addressing it. We are hyper about D&I and so we constantly check on what is the percentage of women? What are we doing to make it more inclusive? Are we sensitizing hiring managers? Also are we broadening the base, today in our business there are spots in which you will find women and there are others you will not find them at all…”)

Bias expresses itself in terms of expectations regarding the job, (34- “Long hours, travel, if you don’t travel you are not good, if you are not aggressive
you are not good”) or they may be some preconceived notions about married women and their commitment to their work (34- “Don’t take women of a certain age they will get married then they will go on maternity leave, then they will have issues with their kids”). Women executives make reference to the struggle involved in handling this bias (34- “To be heard itself she has to make serious effort”).

16% of the 105 women interviewed feel that the bias exists due to specific factors like supervisor’s attitude, organizational history, the wider culture of the place and the number of women in the organization. The bias reduces when women prove themselves and establish their standard of work in the organization.

**Heroic Masculinity is Supervisor Dependent**

The attitude of the supervisor is one of the main causes of heroic masculinity. Though it may exist in a broader sense in the organization, the attitude of the immediate boss is what will affect women specifically. (15- “It is very, very supervisor dependent. There are some supervisors who have the ability to look at the broader vision and not just focus on a limited performance”). (89- “I think that it is a person thing, but I think a woman does get affected”). The attitude of masculinity may come from women or men bosses. (08- “I had a lot of women bosses in my career and I think some of them have been extremely women friendly and some of them haven’t, I think it is based on personality and not gender”).

**When Men Dominate in Number Heroic Masculinity may Increase**

In an ‘all male’ organization the attitudes are never challenged and hence they may become accepted and unconscious. These attitudes are perceived as bias by women and other minority groups. (21-“Sometimes the organizational cultural can be masculine in nature. It could be so in places where you have a profusion of only males, where over a period of time you have denied entry to women, then yes, the culture could be masculine and a female coming into it would feel a little disoriented”). (101-“Minority will have some problem only that it is not intentional. It is because we (women) happened to be few in number
and in organizations; time is a major constraint the ‘long hours’ bias may come. In this kind of industry they give importance to time and so the female employees are treated as a secondary choice. There is an opinion that they may not be able to spend that much time at the job.”

Organizational History

The origin and evolution of the organization is one of the major determinants of organizational culture. The masculine attitude could be embedded in the history of the organization too. (30- “It is very different from one organization to other. In multinationals for example there are a set of basic attitudes for work and they don’t get changed by whims of one individual. They could change, but then it has taken them years to do it. A new multinational may have a different situation. In domestic companies in India, the biggest problem is that they are founder influenced because it is owned and run by founders. So if the founder is old fashioned or fixated about some idea then nothing can be changed in the company.”)

Wider Culture of the Place, State or Nation

Expectations in an organization are to a great extent determined by the culture of its location. Larger societal attitudes filter into organizations. The increase in professionalism will reduce biased and provincial attitudes. (33- “In Calcutta it was more warm, people oriented, but in Bombay of course there is lot of professionalism. The State’s culture influences the work culture and expectations are defined within it”).

What is perceived as bias is influenced by expectations of individuals. In many countries longer breaks for maternity are not expected by employees. But in India the role of a mother and motherhood is given importance and so women perceive bias if long maternity leaves are not given. (36- “In Singapore for example, maternity is encouraged because the government encourages you to have more children and you would get a tax break if you have more kids. The way they approach is just that they will go out have their baby and they will come back. It is not made into a big issue, it is just those 3 months you are off and then you are incentivized to come back early, so it is a very matter of fact thing.
In the West also it is quite matter of fact, but they have their kids a lot later in their 40s. So that is what I meant when I said initially a lot of people opt out in the Indian context because of the family angle. First there is a pressure to have the kid and then there is a pressure to bring up the kid and bring up the kid by yourself. Most of my friends and it is really quite sad, recently we had a College reunion and I am the only one, (we had 13 girls in our class) who is pursuing a career. Everyone else has opted out at some point, so some of them opted out much earlier on, some of them under disguise of we are doing consulting, we are doing our own thing, but this flexibility at some level is an opt out. I don't know whether it was so much the office pressures and because the juggle that you have to do and the travel”)

(88- “If I compare my experience .... In the previous organization (US culture) if you perform you are known, it is nothing like you are a woman or a man, but in the Japanese culture it really makes a difference, in a meeting a woman thinks twice even before she speaks”).

Organizational Level

The women executives feel that the bias of heroic masculinity may be more in the middle levels than at top levels, since the need to deliver is higher and the executives are already recognized for their capability. (84- “I think it is there to some extent and I think it exists more at the middle management level. I think when you reach the senior levels it is more performance driven and there is higher visibility, so those biases will be less”).

Preconceptions

There are preconceptions about women that can sometimes account for the low representation of women at the top. (39- “There are no senior women on the Board. It probably is not that women opted out by their own choice; it looks like women have hit their glass ceiling. It is not because they feel that they cannot manage, it is because others feel that they will not have energy”).

Proving Oneself

The biases are greater at middle level than at top level. Women executives expressed that rising in a career presupposes capability and visibility and so
these biases are lesser at the top. (85- “When people have seen you deliver and you already have got a certain level of credibility in the organization then there are not so many questions asked, but I will be candid that yes, at mid levels, I think it does make a difference, people do try and stereotype people into saying these are people who leave early and may not be serious or she is a woman so she has things to do at home and she will only spend X hours, but I look at it this way that if you really are performing on your work you can just ignore some of this noise because in the long run people will see what you are delivering, so noise will keep happening I am not saying no, but you have to get over it”).

04- “I think it takes a while to establish yourself. In the initial phases, there might be inhibitions like I don’t know whether she will take the load or will she be able to manage, but I think if you are able to prove yourself then it is ok. This could be true for a man or a woman...)

The proving of oneself is in a way a process of individuation and growth. However the executive women do admit it is harder for a woman as compared to a man. (35- “You are treated well when you reach a certain level because it is not the environment in the organization or the rules and regulations, it is just that you have been successful and you know how to assert yourself and you have dealt with all kind of people, it is something which is inherent in you that you develop”).

(66- “What I have seen and also experienced is that you have to prove yourself at least two times more than what a man will do, and you have to prove it many times, but once you have done that then it increases your acceptance in the organization”).

Ways and Means to Resolve the Bias

Women executives also say that the biases can be overcome. While some of the solutions they offer are a compromise at best, some are positive and proactive actions. 

Shift to Roles that Require Stability
The compromise decision is to shift to roles which require less travel or demanding hours. While this may be a practical solution it cannot be generalized to suit everybody. (04- “You might lose opportunities or you might not be considered for certain roles which expect you to travel a lot. I feel we should use that constraint for making it an opportunity like shifting to roles that need stability, where you need a person who should be there for a longer time to see things materialize and actually invest in terms of time…”).

Increase Number of Women to Shift Culture

(99-“It is very difficult to typify an organization as having a male or a female culture. I think it depends on a whole lot of factors. There are organizations I know which are very male dominated in fact they don’t even hire women. Change in policies will change culture. Hiring women will make a difference”).

Women executives make a case for diversity saying that women are more relational and less hierarchical and so they create more openness in the organizational culture. However they do admit that there are men executives who are open and there are women executives who are biased.(21- “One of the subtle differences is that women are nonhierarchical in the style of managing. In masculine cultures it is essentially as per protocol, where hierarchy matters the most and where you pull rank in your conversation and your engagement, but with a women manager I have seen the ability to connect to the last person in the lowest level without bringing in this hierarchy issue. So when you have more women I think that you would find the culture little more open and relaxed. I haven’t worked in different organizations to say this is more masculine, but within the same organization I can see business units, so units where it is essentially male dominated do have a very strong hierarchical culture which is completely built on the ranks and where there are more women you find a little more open and you have the whole thing about you know reaching out at people, engaging across lines that tends to happen a little more, but again I must tell you that I find men and women on both sides”)

Use it to Create Balance in Oneself

Some women feel that the heroic masculinity can be used to bring out the
masculine facet in oneself. They do not look at it as a discriminating factor. (27-
“I feel the masculine culture is useful. You need to be a little more aggressive
to get there, to be accepted in a man’s world and that brings out a certain side
or facet your personality which you thought never existed! So in that sense it
is very fulfilling because you are more balanced and you also get the respect that
you deserve, people look up to you.”)

Quantitative Findings

In terms of relative weight for each opinion, it is found that 60% of 105 executives
who were interviewed feel that gender bias does not exist, 24% say it does and
16% say it could exist in some organizations based on specific factors. (See
Figure 5.3)

An industry wise analysis of the responses shows that the respondents who
feel the bias does not exist are spread across industries (with the exception of
shipping industry) evidencing that the bias of heroic masculinity is not experi-
enced by majority of women, across industries, in India. Consultancy, Health,
and Insurance sector report absolutely no bias. However the number of women
executives interviewed from Insurance and Shipping industry is less than 3 and
therefore any conclusion will be unwarranted. The Banking, Finance and IT in-
dustry which are heavily dominated by women in India and have a fair number
of executives at the very top levels, report the existence of bias to a moderate extent. This can be because the recession which has put a performance pressure on these industries, making them more bottom line oriented and less long term oriented. See Figure 5.4.

Foreign companies have their own organizational culture which is different from the culture in Indian companies. Women executives in India perceive that bias of heroic masculinity is greater in foreign companies (48% perceive bias due to heroic masculinity) as compared to (36%) Indian companies. 64% of the women categorically say it doesn’t exist in Indian companies while only 52% say so in foreign companies. (Figure 5.5)
An organizational level wise analysis of responses reveals that higher levels (very top include VPs, MDs, Country Heads, Global Heads, Directors, CFOs and CEOs) and top (General managers, Associate Directors, and AVPs) feel that heroic masculinity exists more than upper middle levels (Managers, Administrative executives and Senior managers). (See Figure 5.6) This could be because at higher levels the pressure of delivering performance increases and nurturing activities may be relegated. As expressed by the women executives, the impact of competition, market realities and recession promotes the masculine culture.

The impact of the wider culture of the place enters the organizational culture too. The women executives working in north Indian states of Delhi and Gurgaon report greater bias than the south Indian states. Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai have the maximum women executives who categorically deny bias. Mumbai presents a mixed picture with 45% reporting bias and 55% reporting no bias of heroic masculinity. (See Figure 5.7)

(33%) of the respondents who identified bias said the culture of the organization, culture of the place where the offices are located and the overall culture of the country which is patriarchal create masculine attitudes in the organization. Market conditions like competition and recession, which force organizations to become more stringent about hiring, promoting and women and providing flexible schedules (23.8%) was also quoted as a major reason of the bias of heroic masculinity in the organization. Other reasons quoted were Individual factors
Figure 5.7: The perception of gender bias of Heroic masculinity classified by place of work

![Graph showing perception of gender bias]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percieve bias of HM</th>
<th>Do not percieve HM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 5.8: The reasons for Heroic masculinity according to women executives

![Bar chart showing reasons for Heroic masculinity]

- Market conditions
- Proving oneself
- Culture
- Stereotypes like Tmtm and Tk
- Individual factors

Women executives lose on networking because they have some constraints. Chief among them is responsibility at home. The cultural impact and the spouse’s attitude also act as deterrents to socializing and meeting others, which is necessary for networking. Sometimes individual factors like personal attitude and priorities determine the time spent on networking.

- Responsibilities at Home
  - Networking is important, but in order to balance family needs, women consciously ignore it and lose the attached benefits of networking.
  - "I can either choose to network or I can go home and spend that time with my children, what do I choose? I will choose the latter, I know it comes at a cost, I am aware of it but under the circumstances it is a cost I have to pay”.
  - Men have lower responsibility and have a greater amount of time at their disposal.

- Individual factors like the personality of supervisors and the need to prove oneself in the organization before being accepted. Women executives said that both men and women have to prove themselves and that once they establish their credibility, the pressure decreases. They did not feel this bias is gender specific (Figure 5.8)

### 5.5.2 Cultures of Advantage

Masculine cultures create a set of norms which privilege men and disadvantage women subtly. These are called cultures of advantage. One such advantage, especially at higher levels is networking opportunity. At higher levels, this is an important skill on which women miss out and it consequently creates a setback while aiming for higher growth. (27 - “Again it all boils around environment,
the do’s and don’t’s society puts on the women. In our industry a man can constantly be wining and dining with potential clients and creating important contacts or whatever, but for women it takes a little more. . . . you know it is an effort.”)

Women executives affirmed the importance of networking skills at higher levels of the organization. (See Fig 5.9) They described it as an effective means to get information and build rapport. (05—“Networking is extremely important as you go higher up. Networking, means effectively meeting people, exchanging news, information and getting to know what is happening”), (47—“Networking is extremely important as you grow in your career, there is absolutely no two ways about it”).

Networking is of two types according to women executives. One is called personal or social networking and the other is professional or business networking. Both are considered important to succeed in the profession. (100—“I think networking is important and it is not true just for a work relationship I think networking is important for any of our personal relationship and it is the investment you make in a relationship”), (“I don’t look at personal networking different from professional, it shows you are able to have conversation and you are comfortable talking to a person. This is necessary in business too”). Refer Figure 5.9.

Constraints

Women executives lose on networking because they have some constraints. Chief among them is responsibility at home. The cultural impact and the spouse’s attitude also act as deterrents to socializing and meeting others, which is necessary for networking. Sometimes individual factors like personal attitude and priorities determine the time spent on networking.

Responsibilities at Home

Networking is important, but in order to balance family needs, women consciously ignore it and lose the attached benefits of networking. (43—“I can either
Figure 5.9: The conceptual map of the opinions of women executives regarding Networking skills

Women executives lose on networking because they have some constraints. Chief among them is responsibility at home. The cultural impact and the spouse's attitude also act as deterrents to socializing and meeting others, which is necessary for networking. Sometimes individual factors like personal attitude and priorities determine the time spent on networking.

- **Responsibilities at Home**

  Networking is important, but in order to balance family needs, women consciously ignore it and lose the attached benefits of networking.

  \(\text{"I can either choose to network or I can go home and spend that time with my children, what do I choose? I will choose the latter, I know it comes at a cost, I am aware of it but under the circumstances it is a cost I have to pay".}\) Men have lower responsibility and have a greater amount of time at their disposal.

- **Individual factors**

  Stereotypes like Tmtm and Tk

  Culture

  Proving oneself

  Market conditions

Women executives spoke of constraints they face in terms of time and travel. They felt that this prevented them from networking.

- **Ways women network**

  Sincerity and focus is enough

  Industry dependent

  Networking

  Importance

  Constraints

  Personal vs Professional networking

  Responsibilities at home

  Cultural mindset

  Personality and preferences

  Impacts performance and career

  Political suaveness

  Decision making

  Comfort levels

  Organizational structure

  Access to the top

  To draw help when needed

  Lunch, breakfast meetings

  Shopping trips

  Women only networks

  E-mail

  Floor walks

  Townhall and offsite meetings, Skip level meetings

  Organized forums

- **West vs East**

  Women executives choose to network or I can go home and spend that time with my children, what do I choose? I will choose the latter, I know it comes at a cost, I am aware of it but under the circumstances it is a cost I have to pay”). Men have lower responsibility and have a greater amount of time at their disposal. (03-“Men can cut themselves away from home and just come back late but we take responsibility at the home front and that is why we don’t have the time”), (05- “Men have more of an advantage on the networking front because women after a job want to go home”).

Women executives spoke of constraints they face in terms of time and travel. They felt that this prevented them from networking. (41-“I do think women network less because of all the different things that they are juggling, and because time is a constraint”), (96-“Networking is important I agree but for networking we need a lot of time even to sit and write mails in the office is difficult”). (53- “It is factually true because we can’t go out for parties and take somebody for a drink. Even in travelling there are some constraints. In fact travel has become so tough for me. My husband had a cardiac problem and my son is not married and there is nobody at home, so if I am away I will take the first early morning flight at 4 and come back with the last flight so that I am at home”). (99- “I
totally agree with this, my auditors came in and then they told me that I am the only one in the office that doesn’t utilize the budget on entertainment. I am not going to invite somebody out for a drink or dinner. I need to get up here at 6 on the dot and get back home to be with my kids, husband, at house to attend to an ageing mother, all that that is there.”

**Cultural Mind Set**

The cultural role and social expectations determine behavior. Women executives expressed diffidence in socializing with men. (48-“In general I feel there is no real glass ceiling but if you really have to get to the top I think the internal and external networking becomes definitely very important and I feel sometimes it is a bit of a problem for women especially when they have a family and they have to divide time equally and plus the influence of their own individual culture or values prevent socializing as much as men. It is not that they cannot but in practical sense I find that could be a little bit of barrier.”)

Bonding over alcohol is common among men executives. Many women do not drink and so they feel out of place when they have to socialize with them. (75-“I feel that there is a certain disadvantage in terms of bonding, the closeness with which these guys can bond together because of their drinking, it cannot happen when I am there. I will tell you one small example, we have 3 officers of our group in this place, now I am the senior most person, so when we go for a party for example and there are drinks being served the entire office guys will not drink till I leave, it puts me under lot of pressure because I am hurrying to finish my whatever juice or drink and get the hell out of there so that they can enjoy themselves...”)

(05-“Networking largely happens over a drink, on the golf course, over dinners, most women have families, etc., by nature will not, on their own go pubbing, drinking and golfing.... I do a lot of networking but I keep it to professional networking. To some extent women are at a disadvantage on the networking”).

Women executives socialize better with other women executives. (15-“I think that works for them better definitely because when I was talking about bonding which women do at workplace it is typically with women employees not with men
5.5. SETTING

employees. With men it does happen to a very limited extent”). This inhibition is however on both sides. Even men would not like to meet a woman executive alone. They prefer it to be a group interaction (28–“This is not something where only the women have an inhibition, men also have it as much as women do. I have seen this and experienced this. I once organized a meeting for one of our senior executives in another town, and I said “since you don’t have much time I will ask the person to meet you in your hotel for a breakfast meeting”, the immediate reaction was “no! I don’t want to be sitting with an unknown lady in a restaurant in a strange city”. So there could be an inhibition for men too. It is culturally not accepted, they don’t mind if it is a group. One to one meetings can be misunderstood”).

Another quarter of dissention is the spouse. Husbands often dislike their wives taking calls at night or having meetings in the evenings. So women executives are constrained from this form of networking. (44–“You can’t always expect the man in your life to take it the way you want them to take it. My husband wouldn’t appreciate any call that I take in the late nights. There are times when I get calls from the US and because of the time zone differences it naturally extends into the night and he is not very happy during those calls. He says “no, this is the time you get to spend with us. Why are you on the call? Why can’t you finish it?” Not that he doesn’t understand but that attention is demanded, so you got to sacrifice something for something else. And so I tend to keep professional timing separate from domestic time, because I don’t want my peace at home to be sacrificed at any cost. I want to be at home and I want to be peaceful at home. Harmony at home is more important. I am happy that he is allowing me to take up a job and work at it during the day and I can do whatever, I can go wherever and there are no conditions on that front”).

Men have greater scope to network as compared to women and this poses a handicap while focusing on a higher position. (102–“Men certainly have bigger and wider networks than women. They can socialize even at night and go out with the guys for a drink while women have limited possibility to socialize and they tend to admit even into their homes only a few people in whom they have
confidence. In banking, customer relationship can be built by going out with them, building connections with their families which are difficult for a woman to do. I have felt this handicap keenly in my job. Maybe some people would not feel averse in doing so but since my husband is not the very social type I could not include him in building these networks. Because of the mismatch in our interests and because I’m a woman I do have lesser networks than my men peers. Many times I turned down social functions because my husband cannot accompany me or there are issues of how to entertain them, where to go and what to say. Men have a different form of communication which I might not gel into always”).

Personality and Preferences

Other than social and cultural reasons, individual factors such as personality and preferences also inhibit women from networking. (47-“Two things- personal preferences and personality affect it”). Personal beliefs and values determine the cut off point in the extent of socializing. (49-“Networking skill also is based on the belief system a woman has when she comes to work”). Women usually limit it to their comfort zone. (21- “ I think that whether you network or not is really your conscious choice. It is not whether it is mandated by the organization or whether it is good for your career progression, it is about what are you comfortable with”).

Preferences are also conditioned by the culture of the place. (86-“ I feel it does handicap women to some extent, for example there are places in India which are very, very networking oriented and they have very fixed ideas of networking. Suppose you go to Punjab if you don’t drink it is a big handicap because everybody seems to have it, if you go into the south there is no problem at all, so there you don’t have this issue whether you play golf or you drink.”)

Gender and Networking

Gender also moderates networking ability and the modes of networking. While women are clear about their values, they are unclear about the modalities of networking. They are wired differently and hence it affects their networking abilities. (50- “Women are clear about values but they don’t understand which
battle to take and how important the battle is and things like that and so there is an element of trial and error. They also have greater emotional attachment to a particular issue, while men, they are not so fixated and therefore, they are smarter. They show off less or they become too conscious, and therefore their leveraging is also not as good”. Their networking also more level based in the sense in lower levels they network better and even in their networking they are seeking genuine friendship. Women tend to expose their vulnerable side and they hunger for emotional connect and this sometimes works for the benefit and sometimes it doesn’t. The other negative point about women is that they need constant reassurance and they do not really drop things, they will seek very high levels of perfection and therefore sometimes they do not achieve as much”).

(103 – “It is true women have lesser networks and seek emotional support. Men’s networking skills are better than women. It is in them. Their net working skills help them to be in touch with what is happening. Men tend to discuss work-related issues everywhere even if they are talking to people who are not in the same industry. From the work point of view this networking helps”).

Men tend to speak of work more than women. Women speak of families and other interests. This is one reason why their networks are not as efficient. (79- “When men start talking, it is about work and so there is lot of knowledge transfer and business information, which doesn’t really happen in a women circle. If at all they meet, they meet over a coffee and talk about babies, sarees and shopping and all that... when I go out with the men circle I always feel that I get more information in terms of business. So when it comes to more of business I always prefer the men’s circle”).

Some women executives completely disagreed with this point of view. According to them excessive networking consumes time. Women, they felt, concentrate on the tasks and therefore deliver more to the organization. (104 “Men may have a culture of advantage, due to their socialization and their ability to have wider networks but women take their responsibility seriously and tend to accomplish through hard work and sincerity. Wide network sometimes dilute responsibility. The women’s deliverables are much better”). Younger women
are wary about networking because they fear being taken advantage of. They are hesitant to ask for favours as it may entail a return favour which they cannot afford. (61- “Women also fear being taken advantage of especially when they are younger and therefore they are very careful and that reduces the degree of networking. So there is fear of being taken advantage of and this vulnerability of women may be one of the reasons why they don’t network as much in the early stages of their life and which later on also affects their career”). (15- “Networking in terms of getting things done is more of an advantage for the guys. I have seen it not only in myself but in other women employees. If they want somebody to do it they want them to do it because they are supposed to do it not because you are asking them to do it. Women are very hesitant to ask for a favor maybe because they don’t know what kind of favors they may be obliged to return later”).

Importance

Men have a cultural advantage with regards to networking skill and this is one of the reasons why women do not make it to the C-suite. Women executives realize the importance of networking skills for their career, performance, and access to the top. They also describe the need for networking to have support and strengthen decision making.

Impacts Performance and Career

Networking was considered important by the women executives for a variety of reasons. Chief among them was career. (23- “It does impact your career.”) While hard work plays a role in the beginning, the discerning factor for the highest positions is networking skill. (25- “I think networking is immense with men, women don’t. It is a disadvantage. There are plum positions which will be offered to a man not to a woman because of networking. Your work can talk X amount for you, beyond that it is a little bit of networking you do whether in the company or the outside).

Networking Builds Relationships and Support.
It improves comfort level, helps in getting decisions endorsed and speeds up performance. (08-“I think it is very important and I think unless you kind of figure a way to address that you will always be at a disadvantage. It is absolutely critical and I think it works in a lot of ways, it improves comfort levels, you are more comfortable, gets your decisions endorsed, you tend to get support . . . .so it impacts your ability to smoothen things, get things move faster, less questions are asked and thus it impacts your performance”).

Political suaveness is essential. Performance alone is not enough. A degree of political suaveness is necessary to succeed. (25- “When that you come to a particular level, growing from that level needs a little bit of networking and political agility . . . .you need that support”). This is more so when one rises to higher levels in the organization. Networking skill helps in this regard. (43-“When you are at the bottom of the pyramid close to 50%-55% of your population could be women, depending on the industry you are in, but as you move up, I don’t know if any organization that will have more than 10% women. Even as I have moved up, the people that I need to network with, network differently than I would like to. To succeed with those people because they are the 90% that I have to network with, political smartness is a must”).

Decision Making

Networks help people to get consensus. When women are not a part of this network they miss out on the informal decision making. (88-“Generally these people go for a smoke, most of the decisions are taken there and it is not even informed! When it actually comes on paper- you are like ‘what is this? I was not even aware of this’ and they are like ‘yeah, actually we decided on it’. It just comes there, in your face!”)

(77-“Men will sit and drink and they will also have lot of decisions made there. In the south, they will make decisions in their temple visits, and you don’t know what is happening in the organization”).

Comfort Level

Networking builds a degree of comfort level which is essential to perform well, but women cannot be a part of these groups. (26-“They break the ice
much faster because of the social networking. Typically what used to happen, is that the Regional Manager who is a man, sits with others for a drink, the Divisional Managers, the Branch Managers, all the Development Officers and you know continue that networking in the evening probably after 7. When I was a regional manager, I wouldn’t do it and miss out on lot of information”

Access to the Top

Networking with higher ups is also sometimes a strategic necessity. (86- “In some ways yes it does disadvantage you, especially networking with your bosses. I think it affects you more there because you can select your client, but you cannot select your boss and there could be areas where you see your peers forging thicker ties. Sometimes if your boss has come from an outside location and if you refuse a dinner it may cause ego problems and things like that, so it does affect”).

Organization Structure

When the organizational structure is decentralized or matrix, networking with peers is important. (17- “Networking is very, very important and particularly in an organization that operates on what we call a matrix, so you have got segments, products, you have got 2 to 3 bosses, its across geographies, it is one big muddle and in that context the ability to network is crucial”).

Draw Help

Networking helps to draw support whenever needed. However women hesitate to ask for help. They are (46-For example, I would make calls to my women friends and ask them- ‘I need this to be done urgently and can you help me?’ without hesitation. Maybe I would think at least once before saying that to a male colleague).

One to One Relationships

Networking is more effective when it is personal. Reaching out to the different stakeholders enhances performance. (07-“I think it is important to network and to build that contact, you need to reach out to the external public whoever your public are whether they are customers, whether your traders, whether they are your contacts because you can’t say that I am very good in paper work and
that is my performance. There are limits in networking too.”

(19- “It has haunted me also many times. It used to haunt me more when I was climbing up the ladder. I was handling corporate banking, when I used to see that men go out with clients and spend time to understand their needs. Now I have come to a conclusion that if you need to get to know a person better you need to talk on a one on one basis, maybe you should better utilize the time instead of going in a group of many people just go single. If you want to do it on an informal basis, lunch is not a bad hour.”)

(45- So the personal touch is difference from networking over mails and stuff like that. Calls, mails, video-cons they happen but the softer aspects of networking is able to be look into their eye, just share a lighter moment, a pat on the back, it doesn’t come through mails or v-cons and this obviously you have to do it when you are in a comfort zone.) Personal networking makes one sensitive to other pointsof view which is a necessary soft skill in global business. (85- “The other plus point is that it will make you culture sensitive in the organization and I think once you start understanding that person’s culture and you are able to relate to a person’s value system it works well”).

Ways Women Network

Given the constraints mentioned above, women cannot be a part of the golf or pubs or late night dinners and other forms of socializing. When asked on how they manage their networks, women executives gave instances of their networking styles which are different from that of men. Formal networks are those which are initiated by the organization or maintained through e-mail, while informal networking is done over lunch or breakfast, shopping etc.

Lunch and breakfast bonding- Lunch meetings do not impinge on personal time and are within office hours. (04- “I think most of the time the men would prefer dinner whereas the women would prefer lunch, because they would like to spend with the kids, family”), (06- “I do lunch meetings all the time, I keep calling all my industry partners. I am doing lunch bonding, big time”). (35-
“What I am talking about is within working hours it is more convenient for women, post working hours it is difficult but it depends on the industry”.

To maintain a personal contact women executives make time to meet people even when they travel. (17”-if I am visiting a particular location I will make it a point to meet up with them, have a coffee with them, may be do a breakfast meeting with them but it is an effort. It may not be drinks, it may not be golf, but it will be lunch, it can be breakfast, it can be a coffee, but it still is equally effective. It is very consciously done”).

(43- I make sure I have a meal with somebody I think I need to keep in touch with, if it is in the same location, otherwise, I make it a point to call and at least catch up, there could be agenda less meetings…”).

**Shopping** - Shopping as a mode of networking is more common among women executives. It helps to exchange information and forge relationships. (84-“I agree I think that exist, but I think there are now enough women, and women also have their own network, I have gone on shopping with two of the other women, so we may go out shopping and decide stuff and we may also discuss stuff . . .”)(20- “Women have their own ways of bonding, they go out for shopping trips, they catch up while commuting. They find their own way to bond, but men do that more in your face, you know let us go out for a beer or something”).

**Information Technology** - E-mail and video conferencing and professional networking sites have bridged the divide between men’s networking and women’s networking to a great extent. (07- “Relationship in business is very important. If you keep in touch with the information technology, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman. Women are equally well-informed now”). (17- “I do a lot of networking through email which is basically a blackberry, so if there are people who I haven’t reached out to in a long time then I will just drop them a mail”), (53- “As long as you network within the given time on phone and email, I think networking is still manageable”). (42- “I do feel times have changed even over the last 4-5 years with the advent of things like Face book. It is not always that networking is in attending dinners and attending cocktail
parties, it is no longer restricted to that.”)

Women only Networks- Many organizations have initiated, women only networks. (84- ”I think among the women we network, in fact we have setup something like a women’s network program, so we have these meetings that gives a chance for women to catch up and network”). While these uniquely meet the networking needs of women, they are not free of their share of inadequacies. Women only networks allow a greater comfort level to their members. (25- Women have different styles of work and they are very, very different in networking as well. It doesn’t come to us very naturally. We are happy to network with women”), (32- “Women are more understanding and supportive of each other so I think that makes a lot of difference. It is easier to talk to a woman”), (51- “I find that the rapport I have been able to establish is good and I feel more comfortable with women networks”). But they feel they can have their disadvantages. (07- “Women are also part of organizing networking clubs where we meet other people, but maybe it is not as focused as men’s networking at higher level”). (51- “Our networking is definitely less”).

Floor Walks, Town Hall Meetings, Off-Site Meetings - Networking can also be done within the organization. This can take different forms. (49- “Town hall meeting is another way that one connect with people, floor walk is another way one connects, skip level meetings that you do with people and formal meeting are different ways of connecting where you have heterogeneous groups of people”). (46- For me it is things that can be done very well within the office framework itself, not calling people at a different time. We work pretty long hours as it is, so not to take any more personal time I walk around I walk and say Hi to people and catch up on the floor. So it just needs very little time but a lot gets done”). (85- “I think women network differently. I guess the difference is that whenever I am in, I will manage that 10 or 15 minutes to go connect with somebody. Whichever meeting I have with the senior folk or the men I will make sure that the initial 5 minutes or the last 5 minutes can be spent in general chit chat, to just connect with people.”) Bonding also happens naturally when you have worked in the same organization for long. (08- If you
are worked in a place for a long time, I think you have that huge advantage. Over a period of time, though you don’t go out and drink together, just because you have worked together in the same office for a long time you build those kind of comfort levels”).

**Organized Forums** - Networking forums can also be initiated by the organization for men and women, without making it exclusive for women. (13- “Women need to network a lot more I believe and I think organizations need to try and create more forums where they give an opportunity for their own employees to network within their own group I feel that is an area we need to work on”). (25- “I don’t know so much about networking but I also feel top executive search companies like EgonZehnder and Korn/Ferry and the very, very top most they should have a full documentation on the women at a particular level so what do women want, one is grow within the organization, second is get on to some boards as well because when you get on to the boards we network in any case.”

(66- “Actually for me networking is part and parcel of my life, I really do lot of networking but of course without all this partying, through the system and then calls and lot of seminars- we invite other finance heads, every 15 days we meet, we discuss issues. It is creative networking, we create forums and many of them working in different corporates’.)

(83- “It does. Women do network very differently infact as part of this WILL forum we have been running these series called social networking versus business networking meaning when women meet the focus is really around home and children and the softer aspects of how you manage your work life and stuff like that, it is never a hard business that I can cultivate this contact and 5 years later I can come back source business that very rarely crosses your mind. We don’t think like that and I think we don’t give ourselves the time to do that appropriately so for example we teach the younger executives in our organization to say No. It is ok to say I can’t do a dinner or a evening in the bar with my colleague but there is nothing that stops you from 10 minutes for a coffee with somebody during working hours or having a calendar where you can go out and
5.6 SITUATED ACTIVITY

have lunch with somebody to do a little bit informal, it is just that we put our heads down and you keep doing all the tactical stuff, one after the other, try and finish it by a certain point in time and rush back home.”)

5.6 Situated Activity

The situated activity refers to the actual interaction that the actors have with their environment. It consists of the dynamic interaction among the colleagues, subordinates and bosses at work place and the woman executive. It takes into account the particular behavior or action of the woman executive and its effect on the interaction with the actors in the work place and home. Organizational cultural behaviours translate into specific biases which women executives, experience.

5.6.1 Think Manager: Think Male

After commenting on whether the biases were encountered in their own career, the women executives interviewed, went on to describe the ways in which it manifests and the probable causes behind them. Responses however range from absolute denial of its existence, to affirmations of the biases with anecdotes to substantiate it. (See Figure fig:mmirtmtnm) (91- “I do have instances in the office where this think-manager-think-male is very predominantly there”), (95- “In practice, yes there is a male domination”), (90- “I think that is changing now”), (94- “I don’t think ever I came across that..as a matter of fact, I only had positive bias!”), ( 56- . . . Sometimes I feel they prefer a woman manager to a man”).

Manifestation of Think Manager- Think Male

The most common instance of this bias is the surprise men executives express when they find that the executive is a woman and not a man. (06- No, they are little surprised to see a woman, especially when you fix up meetings with
Figure 5.10: A MindMap of interviewee responses to Think manager: Think male and Tokenism bias
CEOs and COOs and you go there as two women they are like “Oh! Hello”... Once, we start talking and address issues it is fine). (18- I don't know if they are disappointed, but generally they would expect a man. There are not so many in the senior position”). The surprise also comes from clients and customers. (06- Clients are surprised because the person handling this organization is a woman; they probably feel how come she is here”) ‘Think- manager- Think male’ manifests as reluctance to deal with women or as reluctance to report to a woman.

Women executives are faced with the necessity of managing the male ego in order to get the teams under them functioning. (11- “I have seen lot of male employees hesitant to report to woman. In my team I have six women I have only one guy. I had to always be on my guard managing that guy because I always knew that as a man for him to report to a woman is going to be difficult so I have to keep his ego intact, give him importance, treat him like – “ok you are the man in my team, I will look up to you for some very important things” and that is how I was managing him which suited everybody”).

Sometimes the bias can come from clients who express that they prefer to deal with men and not women managers to transact business. However this too is on the decline and women are being accepted as managers. (99- “When I started out at my job in this office, I would pick up the phone, (I have got a direct line) they would assume that they are talking to the secretary and say they want to talk to the manager. I had to say ‘I am the manager’ and in fact I had to say that to a person about 3 times because he just didn’t get it! It was so annoying! Now there is a change in the environment and therefore I don’t get those responses.”) (52- “I had a professional difference of opinion with a male customer over some of the work that was happening and the argument became very heated. I could see that the gentleman was taking it a bit personally, so I let things lie for 2 or 3 days and then on the third day I went to him and said “I know we had a very heated discussion but it is nothing personal, I hope you understand”, he said “No, madam, all that is fine; only one thought came to my mind”. I asked him what it was and he said “If you were a man, within 5
minutes I could have come and said “come let us go for a coffee”, I would put my hand around your shoulder we would have gone and all that would be behind us, but you being a lady I can’t do that. I personally would have preferred a male manager who would have been easier for me to interact with”. Only one client said this, nobody else said so.”

Impact of Think Manager - Think Male

The psychological impact of working in a masculine culture could be that women executives slowly begin to behave more like men to gain acceptability. When this is done, usually excessively, women can be more aggressive than men. Having gender equity can create an atmosphere where varied managing styles are acceptable.

(67- “I think I would agree to some extent because I definitely recall the reaction when I took over from my predecessor who was a man and people would very open to tell me that there is a big difference in the leadership style, I don’t know if it is person specific or whether it is gender related. It definitely makes a difference when they see women in the team as against an all male team.”)

(21- “In banking thankfully as an industry I would think that it is less than say manufacturing where if you hear the name of any female it tends to be the secretary. In banking it is not so and as an industry there are lot more women. I think in terms of conditioning employee psyche, people are quite used to having women bosses, though they aren’t so many at the senior levels. I have worked in this organization and have always managed large teams. I have people who tell me that sometimes it is easier to work with a women manager than to a male, but I would say that sometimes a woman manager could be behaving exactly like a male if not worse. I think the balance in your approach comes in lot with the type of responsibilities you have and the years and years of social conditioning and which makes you more a nurturer than a hunter...... so that plays a part somewhere, but then if you have lived a life where you being very macho, I think you can get even more extreme than a man could”).
Factors Influencing Think Manager- Think Male

Organizational and social factors are the most influencing factors. Organizational culture has undergone change due to the impact of globalization. Social change too is occurring but at a slower rate. Today, there is no marked aversion to dealing with women, but there is still a hesitation. And it is more at lower levels than at higher levels. (37- “I think 10 years ago it was fairly dominant now I feel it is not true at all. I remember when I used to first travel to China or Japan where I would be surrounded with so many men it would almost be little odd but I just don’t find it true anymore.”)

(39- “I don’t think it happens a lot in the international arena when you really meet with global customers. I think they relate to the wisdom, the experience and, knowledge but at the same time there is at least a 20% of clients who really expect men to be managers. It is not that they get a rude shock it is just that they are surprised or doubtful. In India it is probably a little more than the West. I think it is generally found at lower levels...... because India is becoming more and more westernized and cosmopolitan and people in the top level in the respective organization whom we call our customers probably are exposed to capable men and women at the same time. It is only that there is a perception that women have more worries and then more constraints than men.”)

Though in organizations women are being accepted to a greater extent, social change is slower. Gender stereotyping of certain activities does exist. (51- “If I want to buy a flat or if I want to go to a bank manager for a loan or something like that then they think that my spouse would be the main speaker, they will not maintain eye contact with me. I have experienced it, but not in the job.”)

5.6.2 Tokenism

Most women (95 %) express that they do not encounter tokenism in organizations. (96- “In our organization there is nothing like that, they treat us on par.”) (18- “I think now it has become quite neutral.”) They feel organizations may have fewer women but they do not encounter bias in the form of tokenism
as they are focused on performance.

(102 - “I have not encountered tokenism much. Even though, I am the only woman in a meeting, I think your confidence and the ability to contribute in a meeting, counts more. Your track record, performance and the way you can add value by giving constructive ideas is what counts and not gender.”)

(103 - “As a woman, a gentleman may offer me a chair but as far as work related discussion is concerned . . . I don’t think it exists.”)

(01- “Yes, sometimes I was the only woman in the meeting, but I have never felt awkward or dismissed etc.”)

(104- “No, I don’t think this exists. In my experience, though I have been the only woman in the meeting, I have not been dismissed or treated with bias. My ideas have been taken for what they are worth.”)

Some women executives did acknowledge that bias exists. (56- “Somehow I have felt it in many meetings, where I am the only woman, I feel odd . . . ”) They however did not say it is widely prevalent. (11- “I am the only female executive, so I get that resistance from one or two men . . . but not from everybody. They do acknowledge me as a professional.”)

**Manifestation of Tokenism**

Tokenism is felt and cannot be always named. Women executives express the discomfort of feeling sidelined and unwelcome in the group.

(23- “Nowadays it is more and more rare, but sometimes yes, it is there. I am not talking about excessive deference or dismissive behaviour it is again dependent on the cultural context. . . . I haven’t seen that happen so much in Bombay, but definitely men are a little more conscious . . . you know men have this ease with their smoking buddies and so they are not very comfortable with women. The one single woman is going to feel more out of place than the men. Possibly it makes a difference in very subtle ways which we have not ever articulated. The women feel like an informal member of the group and feel sidelined when the men in their team go out for a smoke and discuss among
Tokenism usually manifests as stereotyping or as complete ignoring of a person. (88-“Either you are ignored fully or made fun of”).

(52- “Sometimes, you do come across stereotyping... there are 2-3 instances which I can distinctly remember. I came across this stereotypical attitude, in my first job in Chennai, from a very young Branch Manager. There was this lease coming up for renewal with the landlord and he took another male colleague who was in operations and who has nothing to do with finance! He took him for the negotiations with the landlord and after he came back he didn’t appraise me about it. After a time the Managing Director was coming to Chennai so he called me and asked if I could go and buy some crockery. I told him I would do it and that I had no problems with it but I also said “I couldn’t help noticing that when it was the lease negotiation with the landlord (although I am head of finance) I wasn’t informed and you went with somebody else totally unrelated but when it comes to buying crockery you are asking me to do this”. Immediately, he told me “You have an attitude problem”).

(52- “In ****there was this another instance where the head of the accounts calls on office and says senior people from the customer organization are coming to visit, the project is going live so I want a bell ringing ceremony like in the New York Stock Exchange. There were two male colleagues and myself, he allocated other jobs like putting up slides etc. and then he looks at me and says “you can probably organize the bell”, I simply burst out laughing I couldn’t stop. He asks me “why are you laughing?” and I said “This is so stereotype! I came here expecting some work and at end of the day you want me to buy a bell! I would love to do that, ok I will go shop for a bell, I don’t have a problem... it is just that such a stereotype attitude”).

Sometimes tokenism comes in the form of insensitive jokes or comments (67-“The men do make some funny comments in the meeting and when they realize that I am there they are conscious about it”) at other times it is about seating arrangements (69- “They didn’t know where to place my chair!”)
Factors Influencing Tokenism

The women executives identified many reasons ranging from personality of supervisor (84- “I think it is personality based.”), (101- “…it changes from to person to person”), individual aspiration (83- “There are very few women on the top because women are not as high in terms of aspiration as compared to men”) to cultural factors, which influence tokenism (12- “At the top level biases are not there, but in the middle level it is quite rampant …..it is the cultural thing.”) The respondents who report the bias of tokenism are few and those that report it also say it is on the decline. They ascribe it to the fact that employees are made aware of these issues and therefore are conscious about their words and attitudes (37- “There is a lot more sensitization”).

Multinational corporations explicitly create a culture of inclusion and so the bias exhibited is more due to social factors and less due to organizational factors. (21- “The multinational culture has been very carefully and consciously inculcated over a period of time. It has developed tolerance for difference and the cultural flows through all levels. So when you sit on the management committee, and I am one of the two women out of 10 or 12 people who are there, I don’t think there is any tokenism behaviour. It could sometimes happen unconsciously because it has got to do with other reasons like social conditioning or the upbringing of the people outside the workplace. So you could have situations where in the social context they would see a different framework but in the organizational context, a well set multinational culture pervades.”)

The traces of tokenism which people do encounter, is at lower levels and is more hierarchy dependent. It is not so much due to gender.(57- “I faced a bit of tokenism, when I started my career and because I was in the manufacturing sector it was pretty bad. But it is not so much from the senior managers as much as from the middle level managers.”) (06- “…hierarchy does play lot of importance like you are dismissed if you are lower in position. It is not based on gender.”) The skewed gender ratio at higher levels is another cause which women executives identified. They believe that if more number of women is
employed, this can be remedied. (55- “If you have more women managers then probably there is more of inclusivity, wherever you have this imbalance of ratio-a one is to something ratio, then tokenism will be there”).

Impact of Tokenism

Majority of the women reported that they do not encounter tokenism. Some of them said that being a minority in fact brought greater visibility. (94- “No I didn’t feel discriminated, I felt privileged”), (08- “I think it is actually the other way around. Whatever you say is magnified and given importance, because you are the only woman”). (71- “If you begin to speak, they stop and listen because it is a different perspective, coming from a totally different angle. So it is more positive”). Some said that while on the positive side one got respect, but on the negative side you tend to be dismissed. (39- “The demand in terms of work is probably not less compared to a man . . . . . . . but you definitely get more respect”), (99- “On the negative side maybe they tend to take you a little less seriously. I sometimes get these little responses which make you feel like a woman and not a professional”). More than bias, a lack of self confidence was considered the reason for the perception of bias by some women executives. (85- “I think it is the woman who feels more apprehensive, I don’t think it is the men who are trying to react in a certain way. I think it is the woman who is hesitant because she fears sounding silly”).

Quantitative Findings About Tokenism and Think Manager, Think Male

The responses of the interviewees were classified as ‘yes’ and ‘no’ based on their response for each question regarding each type of bias. An analysis of the numbers shows that though 42 women out of 105 said they do perceive bias of heroic masculinity in the culture, only 7 of them said that they faced the bias of ‘Think manager, think male’ and tokenism. (Refer to Figure 5.11)

The correlation between the responses to Heroic masculinity and the re-
Figure 5.11: The perception of bias (Hm, Tmtm, Tk) as expressed by women executives

Table 5.1: The correlation between the responses of women executives regarding biases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman’s rho at significance level 0.01, N=105</th>
<th>Hm</th>
<th>Tmtm</th>
<th>Tk</th>
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sultant biases was also calculated. The degree of non parametric (spearman) correlation between the variables- Tmtm (“Think manager, think male”) and Tk (Tokenism) with Hm (Heroic masculinity) at significance level of 0.01, (2 tailed) is low, showing that Heroic masculinity in India Incorporation does not manifest as Tk and Tmtm. The correlation between Tmtm and Tk is slightly higher at 0.564. (Refer to Table 5.1)

An analysis of bias in terms of origin of companies shows that of the 42 who report bias of heroic masculinity, 25 are from Indian companies and 17 from foreign companies. Of these, 5 from Indian companies and 2 from foreign companies report bias of Tmtm and 6 women executives from Indian companies and 4 from foreign companies report bias of Tk. The biases of Tmtm and tk are negligible in an overall sense and greater in Indian companies as compared to foreign companies. In terms of level in the organization, higher levels report greater bias (Hm- 26, Tmtm-4 and Tk 7) than lower levels (Hm- 5, Tmtm-0 and
Table 5.2: Location, level and companywise distribution of the responses of women executives regarding biases

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| Total   | 42  | 63 | 7   | 98 | 10  | 95 |

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<td>Mumbai</td>
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| Total   | 42  | 63 | 7   | 98 | 10  | 95 |

Tk 1). The sample of senior executives interviewed were classified as- upper middle category (Managers, Administrative executives and Senior managers) which was 19% of the total sample of 105 women executives; the top level (General managers, Associate Directors, and AVPs) which constituted 26% of the executives; and the very top level (VPs, MDs, Country Heads, Global Heads, Directors, CFOs and CEOs) which was 55% of the total executives interviewed. The bias of Tmtm and Tk are reported only in Chennai and to some extent in Mumbai. The bias of Hm is reported in Delhi and Gurgaon to a greater extent as compared to other states in India. (See Table 5.2)

The finding that Heroic masculinity is reported by 24% (42 out of 105 women executives) of the sample, while Tmtm is reported only by 6.67% and Tk by 9.5% of the sample, indicates that Hm expresses itself in ways other than Tmtm and Tk. The analysis of the responses of women executives reveals that they feel heroic masculinity which exists in the organization is more due to external
5.6.3.1 Yes, homophilly exists in organizations

When women executives are asked if the glass ceiling due to homophilly exists, they say that it does and that it is due to the masculine culture in the organization. (83 - I would agree with this completely, like at the top - I would think it is a boys club and however much you are part of it you are still not part of it). (43 - I mean you don't have boards that have women, certainly ours doesn't have any women, which is probably the cause. If they don't have women up there, it is because women don't last till there. That brings you back to why they don't last? Why they don't last is because most organizations are masculine in nature.)

While some women are consciously aware of it and speak of resisting it, some others believe it is natural and is to be expected. Those that are aware of this bias think that diversity at higher level is usually lip service. (44 - I agree and in fact I have had fights with my bosses. The guys know the theory part really well, they know that academically this is how it should be, but when it comes to practice, it is seldom put in to practice.)

5.6.3.2 No, it is due to other factors

Maybe, but not in my organization 44%

5.6.3.3 Yes, it is gender based

5.6.3.4 Working together

Homophilly is the tendency to prefer people who are similar to oneself. Since women often have different approaches from men in terms of work style and beliefs, there could be a bias in hiring them to the top in organizations with masculine cultures. When asked about this bias, an overwhelming majority feel that they do not encounter homophilly in the organizations. 29% say a categorical ‘no’ and 44% say ‘it may exist in other organizations’. 27% say ‘it exists’ and quote various reasons for its existence. Those that say it exists, ascribe various reasons for it. Given here is a mind map that summarizes these reasons. It is followed by the verbatim quotes of the women executives. (See Figure 5.12)

Factors. Only 10 women executives out of 42 actually identified stereotyping (Tmtm and Tk) as a reason for bias.

5.6.3 Homophilly

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Yes, Homophilly Exists in Organizations

When women executives are asked if the glass ceiling due to homophilly exists, they say that it does and that it is due to the masculine culture in the organization. (83-“I would agree with this completely, like at the top - I would think it is a boys club and however much you are part of it you are still not part of it.”) (43-“I mean you don’t have boards that have women, certainly ours doesn’t have any women, which is probably the cause. If they don’t have women up there, it is because women don’t last till there. That brings you back to why they don’t last? Why they don’t last is because most organizations are masculine in nature.”)

While, some women are consciously aware of it and speak of resisting it, some others believe it is natural and is to be expected. Those that are aware of this bias think that diversity at higher level is usually lip service. (44-“I agree and in fact I have had fights with my bosses. The guys know the theory part really well, they know that academically this is how it should be, but when it comes to practice, it is seldom put in to practice.”) (36-“It is a psychological thing; it is not only about the men, even the women, try to find clones of themselves. It is a natural human tendency and also birds of a feather... it is not wrong, it is just natural.”) (07-“I think people are more comfortable hiring people who are alike. You will probably choose somebody whom you are most comfortable with and maybe you are more comfortable with somebody who is of your own sex.”) (41-“When you are hiring you are kind of looking for someone like yourself, if you find similar backgrounds, similar accomplishments you make a whole bunch of extrapolations and say that this is what is probably what we are looking for.”) (19-“It is also true that you like to have people around who are like you and it is not true only in work situation. If you have a look at your friends you will see that most of them are like you anyway. So in any group or social setting, you like people who are like yourself.”)

Women executives believe that this trend is changing and having women in the hiring panels will remedy this bias. (36-“That is there to an extent, but I think that is changing dramatically because now for example when I am
getting guys to hire I am insisting that you know they go through a panel and they have at least one women on the panel so you know if you are going to have a women who is part of the decision making and it makes it so much easier she can influence decisions.”

Queen Bee Syndrome

A respondent spoke of the queen bee syndrome, where a woman prevents other women from rising in the organization. (“I have had that experience (women are enemies for women). They are not supportive of a woman and they say, “No, no, you won’t be able to do it” and therefore I will rather hire a male who doesn’t have these issues, so won’t go off on maternity leave for 9 months. Subconsciously maybe that is that they do not want women up there, but overtly they are expressing that you will not be able to do it and therefore they would rather take a male employee who doesn’t have this work life conflict, who will never have maternity leave problems, who will never have whatever issues. Mostly it comes from women, men I don’t think even think about it.”)

Some other women executives say that age of people is the cause of this bias. The need to deliver and the need to avoid conflict in the process lead to cloning. (”You know what happens is you don’t want a person who is going to disrupt the way you work. You are in this trajectory to deliver and you don’t want people who have dissenting voices in the system or may think different. In cloning what happens people get older so they say now why open my mouth, leave it. They do not want challenge. It is an age related issue. It is also the stage in which the company is in and what they want to do.”)

Homophilly may/may not Exist, but it is not Gender Based

While about 29% say a categorical ‘no’, about 44% say, it may exist and quote reasons other than gender for it. (“I have experienced this 1 or 2 times. Two men at the top perceive, hiring a woman as a riskier decision than hiring a man. . . . I have had them telling me “we are going to do this without asking you” or they will tell me later “we already did this we didn’t ask you because
you would oppose”, but that was not because I was a woman.”) Respondents quote three main reasons for top management to prefer people who resemble them- the need for comfort, performance or caliber of the contenders to the top position and the fact that the pool of women executives at the top level is small.

**Comfort Based Homophilly**

Top management prefers people who they are comfortable and this is not gender based, say women executives who opined that the bias exists or said it does not exist. (50. “I don’t agree much. Both men and women can face it. It is more about trust that the top management has in you.”)

(59- “Does exist, trust is the key issue and it is more important than gender.”)

(05- “I don’t agree. Management teams grow with organizations. I can talk about our own organization; the top management has been together for the last 15 years. Now when you work together over a 15-20 year cycle, you start beginning to think alike, a man or woman it makes no difference. When people start working together for so many years there is some amount of similarity. So some amount of thinking, acting, and communication becomes much easier because much is understood.”)

(21- “The cloning instinct is quite prominent. I think it happens for men and women in the organization. The cloning doesn’t cut along gender, cloning cuts along attitudes and beliefs. The attitude and belief of a person that makes the difference. If you are in a senior management team, you are chosen because of your beliefs and attitudes, the way you behave, irrespective of gender. I haven’t been excluded or otherwise because of gender. I don’t really think that women all club together and men all club together. I find a lot of affinity and engagement across men and women.”)

(61- “At higher levels the alignment is very important between the members because there is so much stress and so top level needs dependable people. So trust, confidence and the ability to communicate is what is seen in the subordinates
whom they want to promote and it is not really based on gender. If women put a ceiling to themselves, then the organization is not responsible.”

Performance Based Homophilly

Some women executives believe that performance is the most important criteria and not gender. They also say that the risk of hiring a woman is lower at higher levels as they usually have proven capability. (13- “I think it is finally the right person for the right job and we haven’t really seen people making it to a position simply because you are a woman or there maybe cases where some women may have deserved may not have got it, but I am not saying that is manifested. We have seen in our success stories of people who have made it, all other factors being equal. So performance does play a part and it can’t just be your gender.”)

(104- “Perceived risk in hiring a woman is more at lower level than in the higher level because the women have already proved themselves and have a track record which proves their ability. At lower levels there are concerns that the women will leave when they get married or when they have children. At higher levels the commitment to the organization is already proved and so this is less likely to be a barrier.”)

Comparing comfort and performance, women executives admit that comfort is a higher criteria than performance at higher levels. (39- “I think the person with whom they are comfortable, probably have aligned and probably they feel that they will not be the threat for them in terms of performance I think ........, it is not a gender bias. I think top management has a mix of both men and women, but the comfort zone is important. I think people cannot just think about the comfort alone it is basically their capability to deliver. If there are two pillars, capability to deliver and then being in the comfort zone you can always develop a comfort zone if you actually break away all your barriers of misunderstanding or misconception between the two. Only thing in a very professionally managed organization there will not be too much of things to divergence because all of them would have gone to the ranks with a same set of standards and they will
think alike. So if that person had to come up to that level first, she/he has to be a performer of that caliber, second thing is even if there are small frictions or misunderstandings, that can be sorted out over a period of time. However the comfort zone takes more priority at a senior level than the capability to deliver.”

Scarcity Based Homophilly

Some women executives expressed that the cause of Homophily may be just that enough women are not available at the very top levels. Women opt out and hence we do not see them in the highest levels. (20- “I don’t think this is one of the reasons why you don’t have more women at the top. The pool of women who steadily rise all the way to the top I think after about 6 years or 7 years of working life I think that is the decision point for most women, it was that’s the time that their husbands are also in middle management and then it is the husband’s career that becomes more important than the women’s career. So if that gap of 4 years or 5 years is lived through then I think there is no difference between the woman’s career path or the man’s career path.”)

(23- “No I can’t really say there is a glass ceiling; I would say that a lot of women do opt out. It is more a societal reality because if you compete you give it what it takes then you will, there is no reason that why you won’t go up just because you are a woman. If you are an achiever there is no stopping you place.”)

(35- “****** is now doing this giving this quota, so it is a kind of mandatory for you to look for women. Financial services is very atypical in India it is full of women on the top, certainly not in manufacturing oriented jobs. One is mobility and two is availability. There is just no availability, how many women go into IITs? How many women go into engineering?”)

It was also felt that lack of aspiration and understanding that organizations need a skill set and this need not be driven by gender is important. (46- “I think that was conventional thinking is the cause. In my view, I have interacted
with enough senior people, the number of women who say that her career is her objective is quite minimal and if you at the same time count how many men have that kind of an aspiration and within them how many are actually reaching the board, the number will be pretty less. I would call it an aspiration deficit and leave it at that and not read anything more into it.”)

(49- “I think it is also a matter of what is going on in you, I think it is not actually about men against women, it is to create a team on the top which will give a set of complementary skills. It is not a war of men against women. Somewhere we just have to understand ourselves and today a few organizations are understanding it and they are very proactively doing it.”)

Some women executives expressed that homophilly could be because of provincial attitudes in companies run by such people. They also said that a pro women hiring drive may be counter productive if capability is sacrificed for gender equality. (86- “It is not necessary that if a board was 100% women they will appoint a woman. It is more to do with the upbringing and the kind of comfort level. If you see the typical ‘Lala’ companies no matter how big they have become they are not comfortable dealing with a woman that could be a reason why they would not have women in at the top . . . . I think it is more to do with the metro and small town thing.”)

(87- “I have heard many times, other than the company like **** which had a women drive. I talked to people from that company and asked how is it going, they said if there is a man and a woman and if the man is better than the woman but only by few points they would still prefer to go for a woman because this is a women drive and that drive failed miserably.”)

Thus homophilly is not perceived as a deeply entrenched bias in corporate India.

5.6.4 Double Bind

The adoption of a masculine style of management elicits complaints and feminine style makes people dismiss women managers. This is because communal
qualities are expected and so agentic qualities are condemned. This bias exists when reactions come due to stereotyping. Women are expected to be gentle and less aggressive. So when they assert themselves or force a point they are branded as too pushy and if they accommodate, they are considered weak and unsuitable for the job. This bias is called the double bind (Kanter, 1977). The responses of the interviewees show that 51% of the sample says that the bias of double bind exists, 28% are neutral and 21% believe it is not an issue as shown in figure fig:prevdb.

**Double Bind is not an Issue for Women**

Some respondents were of the view that aggressiveness is a trait which both men and women need to adopt selectively with some people though it may be resisted by others. Women alone do not face any special censure when they are aggressive. (15- “I don’t think it is right to say that a guy can get away with it and women cannot or that women can get away with it and guy cannot, I think both men and women in this case have to balance it out. They have to be aggressive at times and they have to also show their softer side at times because it kind of leads to frustrations within the team. So there were times when you have to be aggressive, if you are not aggressive you cannot get your things done and they get all over you and you cannot get things done there, but if you are not soft then it destroys relationship”).
Figure 5.14: The MindMap showing the different opinions given by women executives regarding Double bind as a bias

Figure fig:mmdopgwe is a mind map that depicts the different opinions given by women executives regarding double bind as a bias faced in organizations.

They say that aggressiveness or non aggressiveness is a personal characteristic. As long as people accomplish their tasks, and they are capable, they get respect from others. Gender they feel, does not act as a factor in this.

(08- “I think essentially if you are a good boss who contributes to the organization, if people think they can learn from you, if people think they can see the difference you make, in such a case then if you are a little aggressive at times they will take it. If they don’t feel they can learn from you I think they will react. At the end of the day people look at you in totality.”)

(11- “My personal opinion is that male or female or whatever if you have a point and if you really know what you are talking about I think you should be able to get that kind of a respect. You also have to learn to respect other people’s opinion.”)

(16- “In my experience I have read of this a lot and I have heard of this a lot, but my personal experience in the job front I have not seen the difference and I think it is largely sort of results driven. If your style gets the result it is accepted.”)

(01- “The person is not viewed on the basis of masculinity or feminity; it’s
more about your characteristics. So if you are aggressive or soft, if that’s your nature, people accept it as it is.”)

Some others expressed that aggression is not needed at all. Women and men who are firm are very effective leaders.

(34- “I believe that there is no need to be aggressive whether it is a man or a woman as long as you are clear and you are firm. There is a lot more that is achieved if you are softer, if you are able to communicate effectively, if you are persuasive and if you are clear in what you want then the need to be aggressive is not there.”)

(19- “Women need not be aggressive. She can be firm, she can say whatever she wants to say, she does not have to throw her weight around, but she can definitely, in a very clear manner express what she needs to express. I have seen several women being able to do it, I mean while she is kind, while she is courteous, while she is polite, while she is being able to kind of get the respect of the people, she can at times to put her foot down and say that this is what it is.”)

(17- “I think being a woman has natural advantages you should not forget that and therefore what you bring to the table as a woman you shouldn’t abandon. I have seen many women who are incredibly aggressive, some who have risen fast, and some who have not. But those who have risen fast by alienating and creating that sense of aggression are not necessarily liked by their peers whereas I would rather use the advantage of being a woman, be well liked and respected by my peers because what I am looking for is respect and to earn that respect by not being condescending.”)

It was also pointed out by a respondent that women have to transcend gender and look at others and oneself as a person.

(105- “I don’t believe it exists. I have men managers working under me and I have not experienced this double bind, which you are talking about. Once a call was received by my manager and the caller asked him if he was Ms. ****’s boss. To which he replied, ‘No. She is my boss.’ It seems the caller was so shocked that he hung up! I think it is important that you treat people well.
Being tough does not mean being rude. And if you treat people with respect, they usually reciprocate. This manager has been offered partnership in other businesses. People try to poach the best people. But he refused and remained with us for 26 years. That is because we have regard for each other here. There is a societal perception that views pushy woman as masculine. Role fixation and socialization occurs in childhood, and so even the most modern women, and educated women carry this role definition in their minds. I think the early socialization does have an impact on our way of thinking. I think it is also important to transcend gender and be a person. If a man tells a woman that her sari is pretty. She usually gets very uptight. This reaction is because of a high consciousness of gender. Why can’t they just say thank you, and leave it at that. If a man invites you for dinner, say that it is a good idea and ask him to bring his wife, because you are going to call your husband. Even if he had any the others intention, it will get diffused. If we are clear about what we want, and who we are, we cannot blame the world. Most often reactions are there because they are so conscious of location as a woman or as a man. I work, 90% of the time with men, and I have never had problems. And I think that is mainly because of attitude. With a positive attitude, many problems can be overcome.”

There is however a big majority of respondents who say that the double bind exists.

Double Bind Exists

The women executives who reported the existence of bias also described the ways in which it is encountered. (07- “I think it is true to certain extent, but in our organization there are very many aggressive women. The men also shout. Sometimes when a woman gets too aggressive, they don’t like it and if she gets too soft ‘oh! she doesn’t know how to handle It’ is convenient.”)

(31- “It is very true because in my appraisal I have been told you are too soft, you are too good, you are too nice you are not tough, I said but I have been tough, give me an example, ok, this person was asked to leave these are
the reason, one incident, more. It is not required and if being nice if you are
problems are solved what is the need to be done but then you can’t help it, you
have to live with it.”)

(56- “Very much yes, it is a very tight rope walking for us we can’t have
this side, we can’t have that side. In case if you are very aggressive kind of a
person, they will say she is too much, she doesn’t have any feminine qualities.
They can tolerate a man being like that but they can’t tolerate a woman being
like that. We don’t know where to draw the line so you are always commented
upon. You are always told you are not supposed to be this way. That will be the
typical appraisal conversations, ‘you are good but then you have been too soft,
you should have handled the situation this way.’...that comment will be there.”)

(88- “It very much happens. Automobile industry it is very very high, if you
are too loud then you are called as loud mouth that is also there, if you are subtle
then you are not even considered.”)

(35- “Women are always bracketed as emotional people that taboo we carry.”)

(05- “When men work 100% women had to work 120% to prove the same
thing.”)

(04- “I would take it as that she has to prove herself at every level more
than the others.”)

(06- “If a woman is aggressive they use to the ****** word.”)

(66-“I have seen there, there when we used to go for some meetings or some-
thing it will be predominantly dominated by men and they will just don’t like
any women even speaking in the meeting, they will just snub you and they will
say it is ok we will talk about it later.”)

(41- “So one of the tips that was given to us to avoid stereotyping in a study
was to bring the family into the picture while negotiating. I actually have used
that in my meeting... where I said listen my husband is starting his business, it
is a very cash intensive business, I cannot take this role with this given salaryand
that the other offers that I am getting a 20% hike etc. Then this somehow became
more acceptable to them. I have to package it in the right words so that I was
not seen as pushy.”)
“If you need to make a point you need to be a little more dramatic and you need to get your point across and I definitely feel that you cannot be too feminine as well. Unfortunately in our companies it does not work, if you are very feminine they think you are very soft therefore you don’t know your job.”

“The whole problem is the stereotype -they expect you to be soft. I am not being aggressive I look more aggressive than what I am that is one disadvantage. I think i need to really moderate it. Consciously moderate because we look extra aggressive even if we are slightly aggressive, because the whole society expects you to be mild, soft, and nice.”

“It is true; I would agree 100% with that. It is a challenge to because there are a lot of us who do hold positions where you have to make those calls and stick by the decisions you take. But there is still a fine balance that you have to strike.….. just the other day we were having a discussion in the boardroom and they said “Ms. —— is very quite but then she will just say something and all of us will have to bend our heads down.”

Communication will be there but that tend to be feminine topic or something like that which others may not appreciate, this is male tendency to think that women always gossip and that only men talk productively. Even men talk about family matters but that will be considered informal, but when women speak about family, they think -any way they talk only about their families.

“Male to male they can be both polite and aggressive, they compensate by being friendly later. We cannot be so friendly. We cannot pat them nor go for a drink or do something like that, so we naturally keep some distance. When we show aggression it is seen as arrogance.”

Causes of Double Bind

Women executives identified internal and external factors which have a bearing on this bias. For instance a respondent said that this bias is more in the North than in the South of India. “I have worked with people from all backgrounds and I see that acceptance is much lesser from men coming from the northern
5.6. **SITUATED ACTIVITY**

states compared to the southern and western states.”)

Others identified **individual and cultural factors** which cause this bias.

(44- “I think it also depends on the culture of the organization in how they take aggression from a woman. There are places where they constantly crib and pass sarcastic comments about women and all that. So if the culture of the organization is such, that all this is not encouraged, and women are looked as equal, there is no issue.”)

(45- “Organization culture plays a role, the other is the maturity of the individual. I think it is more a function of that maturity of the leadership. The gender bias might play up because these factors are missing. Peoples’ life experiences have brought them to the value point that they believe in. You can’t change that overnight. It is a hidden bias, it will not manifest openly. Also I think it is a question of whether the industry is a very women oriented industry.”)

(71- “I think it is just the stereotyping element is there, but the aggression has the same results Expectation from any employee is the balance. In fact you don’t even need to do anything you just need to be yourself. I think you have to earn the respect and once you have earned it then you can enjoy the benefits of it.”)

(96- “That is the male perception I would say because they don’t like to report to a woman, that is a general tendency, it has come up in our culture. So for that culture to break maybe it will take some more years when more women come on top.”)

(79- “Actually very true, the thing is the first rather than your designation or a role they see you as a woman first, so they expect those basic features and traits in you and when there is even a slightest of the deviation from that, they are not able to relate to it. I will tell you when this happens or when I have faced it, say you are promoted to a higher role, authoritativeness is something you will have to exercise but at the initial stage they resent it. Over a period of time both men and women overcome that but the thing is at that initial stages, the transition phase is what is difficult . . . authority is the basic trait of a man. They are authoritative whether they are a leader, developer, manager they are
always authoritative, for a woman it gives a visible difference.”

A few respondents believe that men feel threatened by strong women while some others felt that men have greater balance than women.

(20- “Men are scared of strong women; it makes a man feel inadequate. I think men tend to get defensive if you question them or if try and probe a little bit, women don’t they are more acceptable.”)

(28- “If there is a heated argument between man and a woman, if the woman is too aggressive, it doesn’t go well. End of the day men do have a larger ego, if they get fired by another man they accept it faster than getting fired by a woman.”)

(36- “Somehow I find that at least in middle management and in junior management the guys are more balanced. When they get senior then there is whole shift. . . . As women are starting up in middle management they are far more reactive and very much more prone to criticism, but as they get senior they are far more balanced.”)

Some women executives said that women too have some characteristic behaviour which can aggravate the problem. (47- “It will definitely be there. I would say two things- one is the perception and the other is our own internalization which comes in how we behave. We don’t want to be too tough, so it bothers us when we are tough and so we start cajoling them. If possible we avoid confrontation, but you cannot avoid it when you have to succeed, so you do it but at the same time you want to make sure that they are not hurt. The double bind is there within us as well as in the social perception.”)

(61- “Women bring more of their experiences in life to the workplace. So what happens is if they have problems at home or some baggage which they have not sorted out they bring this to the workplace and this is usually lesser for men.”)

(09- “I feel that whenever you are sitting in a group of men, if the woman develops a complex then possibly she would either be over-reactive or she will be very soft.”)

(21- “Over a period of time I think that women do tend to become as I need
5.6. SITUATED ACTIVITY

to speak a lot and get more forceful because to be heard in a group, I think the natural instinct probably changed more towards the masculine over a period of time.”

(50- “Women are less confronting and they shy away from confrontations and this may not work for their advantage.”)

(42- “In the middle management it is critical because there is a big pool and you need to make a mark for yourself, but once you are there I think it comes with the chair, but yes we are bad at marketing ourselves and we would take 2 steps back rather than take those 2 steps forward, we would think about it before we do it again. In fact just the other day I was talking to a management trainee who is likely to make a presentation next week and there were 4-5 of us sitting there and this girl was hesitating and I told her never hesitate because when a woman stands up to speak or make a presentation she is always accepted more positively than a man, it is an advantage. Suppose tomorrow my boss is here. I won’t ask him about the last press conference he talked. Is it a must? It is not a must, but obviously it is a feel good factor for him, those kind of wooing people, comes naturally to men rather than women. We don’t woo people like that, we want to get wooed, but we don’t woo by very nature. So we do less of that and appear pretentious.”)

Women executives say that this bias reduces as one goes to higher levels and begins to exercise power naturally.

(43- “Whether you call it performance or seniority, beyond a point, if you reached a level where there are a fair number of people who will report into you then aggression is more acceptable. Having said that, I think men are far more aggressive than women. I don’t know of very many women executives who would throw something at somebody who walked into their office or randomly shout and scream, but I know fair number of men who would happily do it. 5.6.4.3 Change in social perception Women executives say that the biases are receding as social perceptions are changing in our society.”)

(13- “In some cases yes I have seen women who probably maybe a little more outspoken even this is a mismatch of wave length, basically it is just biases. I
feel that over a period of time some of this is changing. I won’t say it is not there, there are any time constraints for a woman, that is more because a lot of people’s expectations and the experience of most people around. We are still in many cases the first generation women executives in the workplace. It takes time to actually change your mindset that people can go out and people can work. The same thing even if I look at my organization most of my male colleagues have wives who are housewives so how many of them appreciate the challenges of a working women, it is not there; it is not always there. I think it is slowly changing, but it is going to take time”.

5.6.5 Attributing Gender as a Reason for Success

Successful women would confront backlash for their attainment in the form of criticism, and accusations. People doubt that their rise could be due to factors other than performance and ability. Reacting defensively to this kind of character defamation, probably women would try to tone down their ability or try to reduce their visibility. When asked about this bias, most of the women (57%) said that they cannot say anything about it, as they have not experienced it. 7% conceded it could exist in some organizations, but denied personal experience. 14% said a categorical ‘No’. They say that their organizations are open and supportive of women and 22% say that they have either personally experienced it or have seen a colleague go through it.

Personality and not Gender Based

Many of the women executives say that it is not successful women alone that attract criticism, even men face it. The criticism they feel is personality based and not gender. Some others felt that it is a general tendency to put people down if they are successful.

(01- “It’s more to do with the person that you are.”)
(06- “I think it’s there even for men.”)
(16- “No it depends upon again the merit of that person. If the person is not
5.6. SITUATED ACTIVITY

good and has risen up then people will always question.”

(46- “No I don’t think so it is more personality driven if there is somebody who has a personality which causes people to feel hurt then it would be, otherwise I have seen women leaders being taken as role models. It is the trust quotient that the person generates as the person grows within the organization and becomes an influence and there are some who step on others toes and climb the ladder, ‘so how did the person climb’ talk will happen.)

(103-“I don’t think that women attract more criticism than men when they climb up the ladder. I think that criticism is given to both sexes and is not gender related, at least in India, I think this is true.”)

(85- “I think it is very person based, I can tell you in the same organization I have seen people talk about a woman making it to top and there is another woman who made it to the top who people had huge amount of respect.”)

(20- “The typical Indian mentality - bring down anyone who is successful.”)

Gender Based and Women Face it More than Men

Some women executives however, insisted that this bias exists and women get the back lash of criticism more than men. Women have their appearance being discussed far more than men.

(02- “Yeah, criticism is more.”) (37- “Yes you do have a lot of detractors.”)

(08- “I think the success of a woman is questioned far more, than the success of a man.”)

(67- “In our scenario, do successful women attract more gossip? Yes.”)

(34- “I think the only thing that is discussed extensively are women’s looks whether it is the corporate or non-corporate. I feel that the ugliest of men will have something to say for a better looking woman and they feel they are very justified in having an opinion. Women will not say that, a woman will never berate a man for being not good looking. She will not say oh my god! I have to deal with an ugly guy.”)

(99- “Somehow I think it is noted, because people watch more what a woman
is doing than a man is doing. So I think in that sense you tend to stand out 
better too because it is noted.”)

(104 - “I do think that male colleagues take it badly, if a woman comes up 
very fast. They may not mind a male colleague climbing the corporate ladder. 
But when it’s a woman, there is definitely criticism or doubt.”)

(83- “There is a real life example where I have seen somebody very young 
become very senior in a fairly short period of time and the amount of bad things 
that were spoken... It used to happen 20 years back I mean, for example, when 
I was taking up a job my father would tell me what type of companies not to 
join because those companies are not good for women, they expected you to go 
around with guys and stuff like that and I think it still happens. When guys 
are really going through a situation like that going around with somebody else it 
doesn’t matter and it is accepted.”)

**Causes and Impact**

Women executives say that much of the calumny comes from women and not 
men. And this too is greater in social circles as compared to organizational cir-
cles. Jealousy is usually the cause of such slander. Women say that it does affect 
them. Many of them do not confront it. They also fear the social repercussions 
of such gossip

(11- “I too have heard of this. People do talk and the surprising thing is 
women themselves talk. That is worst thing! If there is a successful woman at 
the top and there is a man saying things about her, the women would add, they 
wouldn’t support a woman. That is really sad, but I have heard it many times. 
In ******, we had a big team and we had women and men in the team, and we 
were headed by a woman. She was extremely good. I thought she was very good 
at her job, but I used to hear all the other women talking in various hues about 
her all the time. The male ego is big of course, but that the women also talk as 
a surprise. Women are more critical. The thing is, I think, at the deepest level 
a woman wants to be there. She wants to be there, but she cannot be there so
she tries to pull those people down just because her own need is not met.”)

(52- “There is backbiting but it is isolated cases of jealousy where typically another woman will say that.”)

(48- “It is there. I do see that more in the social circle than in my own company, people really say oh did she get there? There are comments going around. In my view, fundamentally it is jealousy that is how I look at it. They tend to talk ‘oh these people don’t take care of kids’ and people who talk to me they always ask ‘how is your daughter managing? Who takes care?’ Though she is a teenager, still they can’t accept that I can leave her like that and go, so in society yes it is there I don’t see that so much in my company.”)

(12- “Backlash is more for women. You have your family and social commitments and getting into all these things, nobody can afford it.”)

(88- “Very few actually walk up and say how dare you, very few do that, the percentage of people walking up and saying is very less maybe 5% of women do that, 20% of them ignore, the rest quit, it is to that extent.”)

(44- “The other reason why they are able to get away with it is, any personal comment that is passed at a female is not taken so lightly, it lingers, it is there at the back of our minds and we don’t relish it at all. So it affects us.”)

5.7 Self

The self relates to the individual’s understanding of his/her situation. In this case the women executive’s perception regarding her situation and her way of dealing with them, defines her ‘self’. The mental and physical strategies involved in dealing with the situated activity form her response to it. Women internalize the bias they experience from childhood. This devaluation gets internalized and leads to a lack of self confidence. Consequently, risk aversion and conservatism in action develops. This can impact their ability to strategically envision the organizational action. Women are thus seen unfit for higher positions. Yet another, method of coping (identified in research) is called ‘Cinderella Complex’, namely using feminine wiles to get work done. Women executives were
asked if they felt devalued.

(49- “I think there are certain perceptions about women, which are being carried in organizations, because of the traditional gender roles. The perception is that women lack confidence and they lack the experience. Women need not be compensated as much as men, they need a lot of guidance and mentoring, it is better to put them in support roles, it is better to put them in staff positions. I think these are again perceptions which have been around women, and they have been there for a very long time. They have been broken. I think what women bring to the table today, and I am speaking for myself, is power of motivation, power of good communication, high quality work. I think in terms of strategic planning and analysis, women are equal or maybe better than men, and that is my view. So those myths are still there, but a few women have broken that myth and those are the women who have gone up because of their own self effort. I don’t think the environment has supported the women so much. It is self belief that has helped her to move up, so this concept of glass ceiling all these are myths. We have just punctured the glass ceiling. Those 10-15 or 1%-2% of women who have come on top are absolutely on their own, they have done it on their own. I think that is the only way more and more women come up in the field that will be an influencing factor for many.”)

(41- “I actually agree with that more because I actually think there is a lot more power that a woman has than she realizes, and anything that society can do to help her realize that power will help her. Let us take the example of wage and equity where typically you find that a woman in the same job is paid less and it is not so much that when somebody is interviewing you they are going out and saying this is a woman I am going to pay her less versus a man but what happens is that again typically a woman is weaker at negotiation so she does not negotiate and then you think about it, whose problem was it? Was it the manager’s fault? that she didn’t negotiate because if she had negotiated she would have got it, but again helping the woman realize that and helping her get beyond that will then help society. So it is kind of unfair to say it is discrimination because that is something that a woman can do.”)
Lack of Visibility

Low self-worth usually prevents marketing oneself or demanding one's needs. Girls are socialized to be nurturing and sacrificing, and this may be internalized. The visibility is poor; we don't market ourselves. There is something with the women. I personally go through that myself; I have never haggled for my salaries and bonuses, and I know men always go and say, 'I'm not happy; I will quit,' as a woman, that is wrong. I know but in my mind it is always that I will not put a value to myself. It just is not me; how can a woman put a value to herself? Now that is wrong. I am working in a very cutthroat place; I know I am doing a good job and I know I am adding value and I should be rewarded accordingly, but I am not able to do that. I see so many of my other colleagues who are girls who are same as me, but the men invariably do. For women to be materialistic is difficult.

I don't know if your research supports it, but I think women will not typically ask for a raise or ask for the promotion or push for a good rating and stuff like that. I think when I had teams, the men have been much more vocal about saying that I need a raise. I have never done that to my boss and I have never gone and said, 'Give me a raise.'

If you think there are times when you really need to be visible, you have to make an attempt. I think it is more about the numbers in an organization. If you look at the men and the women in ***** and see the percentage — let's say 5 women VPs and 10 men VPs — there will be only 2 men who will really be successful, and out of the 5, maybe they are 3 women, but what you may end up seeing is 5 versus 10, which may not really be true. So I think when I had a fantastic manager who really pushed me through, and I had that illusion after that first job, that I can just focus on my performance and everything else will just come to me, because someone will be there. But my next role was completely opposite, where I have to fight for every promotion, every raise, and I had to go and prove myself and say, listen, these are all of my accomplishments. I had a manager who said, 'Listen; you can't just tell me that you want a raise; you have to tell me how much because I might be thinking of a different figure or you might be thinking a different figure.' I think we don't like to do this. But it is better for us to go out and put the number and say, 'This is what I want, and this is what I deserve. Over the years I have learnt to just be very direct about my worth.'

5.7.1 Devaluation

Societal beliefs are internalized over a period of time. So women begin to subconsciously devalue themselves. This low self-worth manifests in their behaviour and often gets reinforced. Women executives describe situations where they felt devalued. Only a minority of women executives said that they felt devalued in their workplace. 39% said a categorical 'no' and the rest said they personally had no experience of it but it maybe there elsewhere.

(41- "Again that was a lesson for me early on as well where in the first 6 years of my career I had a fantastic manager who really pushed me through, and I had that illusion after that first job, that I can just focus on my performance and everything else will just come to me, because someone will be there. But my next role was completely opposite, where I have to fight for every promotion, every raise, and I had to go and prove myself and say, listen, these are all of my accomplishments. I had a manager who said, 'listen you can't just tell me that you want a raise, you have to tell me how much because I might be thinking of a different figure or you might be thinking a different figure.' I think we don't like to do this. But it is better for us to go out and put the number and say, 'This is what I want, and this is what I deserve. Over the years I have learnt to just be very direct about my worth.'

(See Figure 5.15)
Lack of Visibility

Low self-worth usually prevents marketing oneself or demanding one's needs. Girls are socialized to be nurturing and sacrificing and this may be internalized.

(30- “The visibility is poor, we don’t market ourselves, there is something with the women, I personally go through that myself, I have never haggled for my salaries and bonuses and I know men always going and saying I am not happy I will quit, as a woman that is wrong I know but in my mind it is always that I will not put a value to myself. It just is not me, how can a woman put a value to herself? Now that is wrong, I am working in a very cut throat place, I know I am doing a good job and I know I am adding value and I should be rewarded accordingly but I am not able to do that and I see so many of my other colleagues who are girls who are same as me, but the men invariably do. For women to be materialistic is difficult.”)

(84- “I don’t know if your research supports it, but I think women will not typically ask for a raise or ask for the promotion or push for a good rating and stuff like that. I think when I had teams the men have been much more vocal about saying that I need a raise, I have never done that to my boss and I have never gone and told them give me a raise.”)

(85- “If you think there are times when you really need to be visible you have to make an attempt and I think to me that is an attempt to very similar to any other man. I think it is more about the numbers in an organization because if you look at the men and the women in ***** and see the percentage let us say 5 women VPs and 10 men VPs there will be only 2 men who will really be successful and out of the 5 may be they are 3 women, but what you may end up seeing is 5 versus 10 which may not really be true, so I think men also undergo the same pressures and I think that is one of the reasons why you see them more aggressive as compared to women because they have a lot more competition to deal with.”)

(95- “I think marketing yourself is more dependent upon your personality. Even women dominate men and they talk so much, they say I did this, I did
Confidence

Women executives feel that confidence issues do not exist for them. Self confidence is not gender specific.

(01- “Maybe, there is a little awkwardness in the beginning but I don’t think it doesn’t really bring down ones confidence. Nowadays, as you said that people are so open and you know even when they are in school or college they are exposed to so much that you know those things of inhibition are really not there. So, when they actually enter the corporate world they are almost prepared to do so.”)

(104- “Self-confidence is a universal problem. I have seen it occur among new entrants, just out of college and senior colleagues at some point of time in their life. But I think that the crisis of self-confidence is mainly at entry-level, when they just enter the job out of B-school. I don’t think it is gender related.”)

Risk Taking

Women are perceived to be risk aversive as compared to men. When asked about it, there are divergent responses. While some women executives felt they are risk takers, some others believe they are not and quote reasons for it.

Women are not Risk Aversive

(02- “I don’t agree. I don’t think so. Personal life maybe but that doesn’t come in the work. Whoever I have seen around me, my colleagues and all they are good risk takers.”)

(10- “I think women take more risk.”)

(12- “At least not in my case I am the one who will take lot of risk, it is more of person specific nothing to do with the women.”)

(26-“No, I wouldn’t agree with that at all, women can take equivalent risks. Infact, I wouldn’t say at all we are risk averse because I am one of the most aggressive risk takers. I think without that you can’t go ahead.”)

Women are Risk Averse

(31- “Yes they are less of risk takers, probably it helps also because men then end up taking unnecessary risks. That risk can be defined in both ways.”)

(55- “I think women are more aggressive than men, they are risk friendly, they take risks much quicker, so they don’t brood over things for too long.”)

Reasons for Being Perceived as Risk Averse

(05- “I think I address the risk part, I think men take risks more easily than women and I think that is the fact. Not really I would put it this way that men are willing to jump in, women think before they jump in. I am not saying that women don’t take risks but given the situation men are willing to take that. Women don’t immediately jump they think through, they evaluate, they calibrate and then they take the risk and many times women are seen to be conservative in not risk taking because they like to think through different things, but men they just jump first into it, but I see equal number of women doing them and equal number of men doing the other also. I know equal number of men who do think before they jump and equal number of women who will jump before they think. It is a personality factor because the ratio of working men to working women is so skewed that most of these characteristics come out because of this skewed issue.”)

(13- “In terms of you know the point on whether you take a considered decision and take your time to think through it I don’t see a problem with that because it is only fair if there are very important critical decisions to be taken you need to have thought through all consequences, ramifications, implications because you just simply top of mind say yes or no. I do not believe it is gender based, so much goes down to the individual in fact probably you will find that is the same thing I am saying for every question but I really don’t believe it is gender specific..I completely think it is personality based and it is situation based in some cases, you know the situation may need you to take a really quick decision whether you are a man or woman you need to do it.”)

(25- “I don’t think women lack vision. They are risk averse that is for sure. They have a vision but they don’t have a support. There is no mentoring
in the organization unfortunately in any of the organizations they don’t mentor. Successful women have problems. There will be jealousy and the jealousy will come both from women and men. Unfortunately what is happening, whilst men take up other men’s cases and want to promote them, it doesn’t happen with a woman to a woman which is the unfortunate part. I don’t know what they are extremely insecure about. . . . .

(24-“I don’t think they lack on vision, but yes they are risk averse, . I think that comes from the fact that we get into this comfort zone of stability, familiarity and don’t want to challenge it. I would probably say everybody is risk averse after an age.”)

(21- “Your first point about women being risk averse that could be true because in terms of final outcome and the way it shapes out, the way I read it it’s got to do more with the driver that you have within you, what’s your driver in your career and again I believe with men it is lot more about the power and the rank and for women the driver lies elsewhere, it has got to do more with contentment, it has got to do more with pat on the back, it has got more to do with I like the job I do and I feel good about it. When you talk to men it is more about you know when do I get my bosses’ job, this guy make so much of money when do I get, it has always got to do with a next job. When I talk to women it is more about you know how happy I am and what I like about it. I don’t hear men talking about how much I love my job and if somebody might give a pat on the back they are mostly cynical about it than anything else. I think the drivers are different, what is called vision is really vision to them is limited to the next job and I do find that very clear because the conversations tend to move differently. If you ask a set of 10 women what are you looking for in your career you get a set of different answers or if you have asked 10 men what are you looking for in your career, so that really is what then finally culminates to is the risk averseness or lack of vision and for the men it is the vision that I wanted to be this.”)

(36- “There are women who are very risk averse and there are women who absolutely take enormous chance, there is an extremity over there and I think
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it is almost 50/50 split. I personally think that there is a cultural bias there as well. I think the women from the South are little bit more risk averse, they are more traditional, stick to the weave kind of thing, the women from the North they are like excessively bold. I don’t know what it is, but I can actually see that and it is very polarized. I don’t know whether you can just put it down to a cultural angle, but there is definitely a difference.”

(37-“I would disagree. Risk averse, maybe yes because we tend to be conservative, more because we are sustaining a family, we kind of look at things a little more from the risk-averse standpoint, but vision I wouldn’t agree. That has nothing to do with gender. To be a leader you got to have your eye on the details, it so important to have your pulse on what is going on, but also be far looking.”)

(39- “I would have probably taken more risk if I was brought up very aggressively but not restrained saying that, but it probably is the nature of the parents that they wanted to be protective.”)

(43- “I think how we approach decision making is different. I try to build consensus by getting different points of views and then taking a decision which may seem like more thought process therefore I am risk averse. Actually it is just the process of making sure that you bounce this idea on other minds before you have taken a calculated risk.”)

(44- “I am personally risk averse and maybe it is because of the line that I am in, I am a finance person. Of course growth and great ideas come only when you dare to take certain risks. While I encourage that I keep saying that you do your homework properly and it should be a ‘considered’ plunge. I think a certain amount of consideration has to go into it, it cannot be just your gut feel says go ahead and do it, you can’t rely on gut feel, what happened to your intellect, just don’t go impulsively that is the reason why maybe I am seen risk averse. I would shy away from impulsiveness. I wouldn’t commit, I would be more careful in committing, I don’t think men are like that. While they take pride in saying that they are not risk averse, but the real reason is probably they are not thinking it through.”)
“I think it goes back really fundamentally to my point of learning opportunities. I define learning opportunity is that takes you out of your comfort zone. To me I think if you are able to do more of such roles your ability to take risks will automatically develop. I think I have seen that in my own life. Challenge boundaries, you will have lot of discomfort, but you know that this is something I have to do or deliver.”

“Risk averse is I think about who you are, I don’t think it is a gender based. When I joined this company, they were on and expansion plan and so it began with hiring a new MD, once they got the really good MD in then they started hiring other people. We made great deals, it was a great place to work in, and we enjoyed ourselves for 3 years. I actually wanted to do a little bit of study on this myself but couldn’t. If you looked at the DNA of each of those people they were so different, coming from such different backgrounds, the one common thread which I saw, as a characteristic in each of us, is that we were all innately risk takers and that is why we were there in the first place. now when I look at it in hindsight, there was not a single one of us and that was not needed for that organization. It was a great fit because you needed people who think out of the box, want to do things differently, not worry about so much and there is nothing wrong or right about it, there are some people who work very well in a steady state place and there are some people who need challenge. Sometimes it can be amazing.”

“Risk averse? I think women by nature are probably a little more cautious, I think before jumping headlong to something you would weigh the options, that probably is because you are just different, you might still arrive at the same decision. I think I am very decisive and actually I make decisions quickly and I stick by them and I also know that I always think about contingencies. I mean the roles that I have had to play, you have to make decisions, and you have to take chances. So I think we just are a little more ‘considered’ in our thought.”
Vision

Another stereotype about women is that they lack vision. When asked about it women executives disagree about it. 44- Vision requires details and the big picture. Before you get into the details you have to zoom out and see the larger picture, see the macro level view and only then your detailing will be correct, so you can’t get down to details without having the overall idea as to the goal. It is nothing to do with gender I would think. I would think there are guys who equally lack in that area and there are also females who lack in that area. I would think so and it is not gender specific.

(41- “I think we are more conservative on the vision side. I don’t agree though I think women can see just as much of a big picture, but on the risk taking side I don’t know maybe that is more cultural from an Indian perspective versus Western perspective, even the assertiveness.”)

(49-“I completely deny it and I would say the capability of a woman to see and forecast and have a vision is pretty good and she is the one who definitely have a game plan in mind when she is organizing her work and that is what I have done. Vision for me is something that the whole work starts with and if you think that women are less risk taking I think it again goes back to my fundamental statement for which I truly believe is that it’s my value and belief system says that I have a choice to make in life and I do want to reach till there then my risk taking ability would be dependent on that then whatever will come on the way I would just jump over it. Others perceptions around me those stereotypes that people will keep hitting you with little hammers it doesn’t matter at all.”)

(02- “Women may have a better vision, more balanced. There are so many vision-oriented women.”)

(08- “I have actually not seen a difference between men and women on these. I don’t know whether it is because of the sector. For instance in ***** we would recruit only from the top institutes, so to be in the top institutes whether you are a girl or a guy you had to have what it takes. You know you couldn’t be
that different because when we were interviewing we wouldn’t sort of say we are interviewing somebody because it is a girl or a guy. So maybe because of that there isn’t so much of a difference, maybe it is there in other sectors.”

(17- “I disagree. I know somebody who looks at the detail very carefully that is the strength, it doesn’t detract, it tells me that I know I need to do this well and state is looking like something else and I think that sometimes is a function of, it will be your education, your experiences and your exposure that will help you determine that vision and those are not necessarily gender biased.”)

(30- “Personally I feel women’s vision is better, but women’s ego is not so huge. Men have a bigger ego so even if a women makes a point which has sense in it, the men will still take time to accept it and if the man is the senior then organization, then will take 2 years to get that!”

(31-“Vision, I really don’t know, it is almost gold seek. Generally, it is what you want and then accordingly the vision it made, it may not be necessarily the other way. Women also have vision.”)

(36-“I agree with the risk averse comment I don’t agree with the vision comment and I actually think that the women are able to look at the intricacies and see the big picture better.”)

(26- “It is not that we don’t have it in us to have a vision, or we don’t have it in us to have a strategy, or conceptual skills. but 90% of us are in the operational levels. So you don’t need the skill, you don’t consciously cultivate these kind of skills. But the 10% who are there up in the top management strategize and visualize.”)

**Poor Negotiating Skills**

Women say they usually lack negotiating skills because they find it difficult to ask for a raise or demand a position. They expect to be noticed.

(21- “I see very clearly that it is the women’s inability to negotiate. The bargaining or negotiating that a man does is much more effective than what a woman does. I feel that when it comes to monetary things, and what you get
out of the organization, I find that the men are very calculative. If there is a supervisor who has to manage two women managers and two male he will tend to ensure that the conversations with the male would really be about the next hike and the bonus and the promotion, but the conversation with the women would typically be about doing a great job, pat on the back. So you know you could have the women walking away from the room thinking I have done a great job and I am feeling good about it, but you would find over a period of time that inequities would start creeping up in terms of financial incentives and promotions and bonuses and I feel that women don’t really negotiate, they don’t ask as much as men do.

I have a large team, my conversations with men are invariably about the raise, the increment, the hike, the promotion, the bonus, they tend to know everybody else’s salary for example, they will know everybody’s increment in the year. My women subordinates manager would never be around, we have something called a performance rating so you could be a 1 or 2 or 3, the men would say that you know I am ok with the 3 rating, but give me the money, if he has got the money then it doesn’t matter whether it is 1 or 2 or 3, but the women will never come in, they will say “how could I get rated 3, but I have done so much better than that person I should have been at 2 or I should have been at “1. It is more about recognition and they say I don’t care what money I get. Right now I am looking for a job for a Senior Branch Manager in Delhi and I am having this conversation with a person from another bank and all she is saying is I don’t care what money you give and I am saying I am going to take you at a 25% hike from what you are getting. The person is saying listen I don’t care about what hike you are giving me but I am very concerned about where you are placing me, what is the level at which you are taking me. That is the thing that I see is happening. So inequities creep in over a period of time in terms of salaries, if you took an organization and you look the average salaries you will find a difference. It is not because this is not an equal employer. It is not that nowhere in our policy it says women should be paid less than the men.

We have no benchmark we have a wide range you know this is the range
within which you need to be, but within that range there could be disparity and that could happen over a period of time and unwittingly, it is because of how people negotiate for what they think they should get. The other things are quite rhetorical it is no longer about being left out, it is not about not being visible, it is not like being a daisy on the wall or something like being pushed aside, those thing don’t happen. Because money is something you never notice, it is never there on the paper, what is on the paper is what your appraisal rating is? What is your behavioral rating? How have you been evaluated as an employee? So, all that is on the paper and for this, HR is playing a role. How much money gets negotiated and paid is never there, it’s always backend. I suspect in my own business if I started seeing I would find a difference between the two.”

(88- “Yes it happens a lot. Actually there have been promotions to people with 5 years experience who are men, but a woman needs a 14 years experience even then she is just taken then as a DM. This was actually not told in the interview at all. Women are not promoted, this woman who has 14 years experience she was hired from outside, she accepted the because the salary matches and only when you get in you know the comparison and that is what happened with me also.”)

Upbringing

Devaluation begins at home, but most of the women executives say they received support from their families. (22- “This is very, very subjective you know you can’t generalize something like this. If you examine the core reason it is personality and it is to do with your conditioning and your background that you come from. If your family has not made you feel like you are somebody who has no opinion and you know at the end of the day there is not much and they have devalued you then you are pretty much going to grow up thinking like that.”)

Skills develop overtime Women executives say that by being in the corporate scene for long, skills are learnt. Be it marketing oneself or communicating ones terms. (23- “In the corporate world these are also learned behaviors over a period
of time because you have appraisals, you give feedback, you watch other people who have been successful, you know what adds to success and that you have, you develop over a period of time.”

(50-“Women are not good at packaging and it is because of their upbringing. They never asked to set their sights, they usually take what comes and make the best of it, so vision is something which they don’t perhaps train for but when you come to higher positions you must have vision so they do develop vision but they sometime don’t package it well.”

Women Want a Job not a Career

Women executives say that women tend to look at their work as a job and not as a career and so this impacts their performance and rating.

(28- “I am constantly looking for male members in my team. The reason being, I have had such horrible disaster with women. The two I hired, both brilliant, one got married went to another city, one was married, she delivered and she never came back. Then I said, now I am going to hire someone married and with a kid and her mother-in-law who was supporting her, fell sick! You don’t have to quit working all your life but we want you to take a sabbatical at least for 6 months. So I have had such disastrous experience over the last one and a half year, now I just look for male candidates in my team.

Today I interviewed a lady and I kept asking her what is your motto? What is your objective of working? There are only two reasons I see, one is financial need the other is working as a hobby. It is very dangerous I don’t like to hire those because they are neither serious about their work, it is like I am working or just to kill their time. The third type are the ones for whom learning and career is important. If somebody is financially not in need of the job then he should fall in this category. Sometimes they would take a decision saying that right now my priorities are different but their eagerness to learn and drive to make sure that they are completely utilized or occupied is more important for them, I mean I am not saying those hardcore career oriented who think that you
should not marry, you should not have children I don’t believe in that category either, end of the day you need a balance because if you get into that category.”)

(45-“There might not be a career map that they have mentally in their mind, I feel that if that is not there in your vision of yourself, and your life 5 years from now, some of your this yes/no decisions on opportunities that present gets impacted. I think there is a correlation there, how much to what degree to what extent I don’t know. Men do have this thought process, very deeply ingrained, that I will always have a job. I will definitely have a job and I want a career. Women see it as a job more than a career and when they think of themselves they are not thinking long term it is like let me try it today and let me try it till my kid goes to school . . . .”)

**Mentoring**

Women executives believe that mentoring has huge benefits for women and prepares them for higher positions.

(45-“It does help to have mentoring systems. I can correlate directly to a very recent instance I had, of a mentee (she is 3 notches down in terms of an organizational level) She came in for a meeting, as we were talking I realized she was very stressed and when asked she said “I am really finding it very difficult because I am not doing justice to my role”. After a little more discussion I said ‘do you think you should be talking to people who can give you some guidance, who do you think are those experts?’, just that one question got her thinking on ‘yeah why am I struggling alone with this?, who can give me an expert guidance on why we are not able to do this?’ and then I told her “I will give you the name, I am not having any role to play in this, it is for you to pick the phone, talk to him, reach out and ask his guidance”. So she enlisted his help, she talked to him and he said “ok explain to me what is happening in this project” and then he said “your life cycle model is fine but you need to do this tweaking to help the addresses” and that was done. The next meeting with her she told me “I am amazed, it seems so silly now, that problem”. )
5.7.2 Cinderella Complex

Using one’s feminity to further one’s interest, is a defensive strategy, used by women in masculine settings, according to research. The Cinderella complex refers to the use of feminine advantage. Women have a tendency to wait to be rescued. They use feminine wiles to get their job done. When asked, 47% of the women executives said they had either seen others using it or had used it themselves, while 17% denied the use of it. 36% couldn’t say anything definitely about it. (See Figure 5.16)

Cinderella Complex does not Exist

Women executives say that they do not see the use of feminine wiles in organization. While some others say that it is not gender specific. Manipulation can be done by either sex to serve their own ends. (83- “Atleast in our environment I have never seen that happen not even at the lower level.”) (60- “I don’t agree.
There is no advantage for women.”) (18- “At least I have not seen too many people I could relate to who are in a position where manipulation would help them.”)

The probable reasons they ascribe to it are that higher levels, there is a greater need to perform. It may exist at lower levels but not at higher levels. (05- “I have not come across it. I have neither experienced it nor have I seen it around me at the senior levels.”)

(02-“I think it is more at lower levels not maybe managerial level professionally, you can’t afford to do it.”)

(09- “I feel that at senior level this doesn’t happen, but at the junior level possibly I have seen this happening.”)

(31- “It may happen maybe at a Management Trainee level or an Assistant Manager level after that if you act helpless you will be asked to go home.”)

(32- “Maybe to a certain extent, they are in only lower levels. When you reach a position you can’t do that and you don’t need to do that because you have reached that level doing hard work.”)

(04- “Some may use it, but I don’t think in the higher level this will work because the men also want to be in that league they want to show better. Sometimes it may work against you if you act like that and might say the she is not capable of handling such a thing.”)

(59- “At lower levels there could be an expression of Cinderella complex but at higher level a woman adds value because she understands things differently and her different needs and her different abilities are accepted.”)

(86- “At a senior level I don’t think Cinderella works, but at the junior level I am sure it works a lot. Gender is not seen as an influencing factor. Women executives say manipulation can be used by both men and women 20- Gender doesn’t make a difference at all, I mean men are exploited as much as women, if not more. So it is the choice of the man or the woman to get exploited.”)

(103- “There maybe some women who act helpless to get their work done. But I don’t think we can generalize. It is a person related fault.”)

Using feminine advantage at higher levels may work to the women executive’s
disadvantage as the competition is high and organization are meritocratic in
their culture and performance determines promotion. 15- I don’t think so, the
criticism increases where the people, men or women start getting perceived as
being incapable of that role and position.

(08- “If you are talking about competitive industry I think at the end of the
day there has to be a performance to go out. Feminine wiles don’t really take
you, so probably it would have worked at entry level.”)

(37- “I really don’t think it works. It is such meritocracy driven world you
can’t really use it more than a few times without doing yourself a lot of harm.
So, credibility is what will command you respect nothing else, kind of works.”)

(41- “If you talk of **** I think, even if I have to act helpless or something I
don’t think I would have got any advantage, exhibiting those kind of behaviors. It
is completely performance driven and you are also perceived so.”)

(48-“I don’t think it is true, but there is a perception that women can ma-
nipulate better than men. I will never take it as women specific quality.”)

Cinderella Complex Exists

Some women executives say that the use of feminine wiles in corporate setting
exists and they say it expresses itself subtly or grossly. 70- Yes, it happens, men
will come to help when they see helplessness and they will say we will do it for
you.

(13- “I have seen both, I will be very candid because there have been people
who have used their charm whatever it may be and it has played a role. Women
who are good looking at the workplace and also equipped with good skills, they
tend to probably also make an impact more than the male colleague, in the same
situation. I will definitely say it is there, but to say that is the only thing, no.”)

(23- “I have seen you know seduction as a technique of management. I have
seen a lot of women using that as a style. It can be across levels. Sometimes you
are even doing it you know because it is cajoling or being excessively persuasive
rather than being firm, I have seen women use that very effectively with men.”)
(75- “I think we end up using different styles depending on the situation and the circumstance, with subordinates it is always asserting yourself, with seniors sometimes, if it is not a formal meeting, where you are discussing plans and targets in which case you have to be very formal, but then sometimes at informal gatherings I think one slips into that feminine style. For example if we are going out and then we are all sitting at a table then I would automatically maybe pour the tea which is actually a very feminine gesture which a guy would not do or like recently when I was travelling with my boss and he is a diabetic so the air hostess came and she gave us some chocolates and I saw him having one and instinctively my mind is ‘oh god! he should not be eating a chocolate’ so when he went to open the second one I just restrained him like I said no maybe you shouldn’t have that which a man would not have done.”)

Women executives cite multiple reasons on why the subtle use of feminine wiles is done and the forms it takes. (71- “It is definitely true. I mean they may not do it consciously it may be a very subconscious thing which you can see it, you can see it happening and I may not talking like it may not be extremes also but a little bit here and a little bit there, of course I have seen people actually use it quite shamelessly as well.”)

Forms in Which Cinderella Complex is Expressed

Being Emotional By publicly exhibiting emotion or acting helpless, women try to control circumstances. (56- “They do, it is not that it is not common, women use you know immediately they will get emotional, cry, men don’t know how to handle it, we do use our feminine aspects. There are people who do that and they capitalize on the fact that they are women.”)

Subtle Manipulation

Women said they use subtle manipulation to achieve their ends. Some of these stories are given below

(67- “I think I do it, very very subtly though. I remember one instance where I was not very happy with the way things were handled by a person who
was heading our department at that point in time and I wanted to meet and he said ok come and meet me at this time at this place and I was like 8 months pregnant and I went from here because I wanted to make a point discuss things and sort it out with him but I went there he was not around he had gone for lunch or something, I sent a message and I did all that but I did not get any response, I went there with an appointment and I did actually come back, I made sure that I see two senior managers and I was tired, got in so obviously the question was where did you go and why are you looking so tired and I said I went all the way there to see him but he wasn’t there so I have to just come back, I was very upset and I wanted it to be known and I think I have done that because I knew that this person had the habit of not keeping up appointments and not really giving things due respect and I wanted that to be known, I think I used the situation.”

(77- “I was with steel authority and I was in marketing of the Eastern region that is in Calcutta and I had to tour and I had a 6 month old baby and my colleague since I was getting a lot of attention he said why should I always tour and you take Calcutta and you should also tour, so what happened is in one of the functions the annual day I took my 6-month-old baby with me and I walked the baby throughout the evening so what happened is the General Manager and everybody saw you got a small baby how can you be touring and they promptly put me into the branch which is the most coveted position, so I could say that I played it to my advantage and it worked. I didn’t have to tell people that I want out of my touring job.”)

Appearance

Women also use dressing to attract attention. Executive women say they dress for differentiation and not for male attention. But, yes dressing is used as a female advantage. (51- “You can leverage on your differentiation , for example when I went to Poland there were some other ladies present in the meeting and the CEO was a lady herself but I made it a point to wear a saree and go then definitely I am differentiated from the rest of the crowd, I am the only one wearing saree so that I will definitely use but that is only a differentiation. I
5.7. SELF

will not wear suit that is what I am trying to say, I will wear a saree and go so it will make a difference and I want that impact or visibility.”

Women Skills

Women have some soft skills which are useful in business. They please customers and diffuse potential situations.

(21- “I think that we use trump cards that we have all the time and you don’t know which trump card you use when, have you used women as a trump not so exquisitely that you know I am really in trouble but it works. I have 2 all women branches one in Calcutta and one in Delhi, I get responses on you know that these branches are very responsive on complaints and they are very good in customer service, all women branch means from the branch manager to the janitor all are women, lot of people come and get their queries settled, they write good things you know very nice women, so I think partly it has got to do with the smiling face and the way that comes across and all that so that helps. Myself, I remember that I used to be in a branch and I was carrying and I was really huge 8 months pregnant and somebody walked in and shouted at me and you know he had a big problem with some cheque and all getting dishonored so he created ruckus around the branch so I just listened to him whatever he had to say so you know he did all of that and then he must have seen me standing there and listening to him with my tummy so he went back and you know after sometime an hour or 2 he came back with a box of dry fruits and he said sorry madam I shouted at you it is not your fault really and I think he left that and he went away. I thought it had to do which was beyond banking or beyond whatever, but normally if it was a man he wouldn’t have done it. I think those perceptions customers carry and so those things play a part. I would think that they may be using it you know why not? I think some do it.”)

Factors Affecting it

Age

Younger women use the feminine appeal more than older women, As they
grow older, and get into the job, gender is not an issue.

(34- “Act helpless, get your job done, be crooked, flirt, get people to notice you....it is a factor of age. At this age don’t expect men to respond that way. When you are talking about power dressing that is a different thing and power dressing is about cues about who you are, so it will start possibly right from the kind of jacket you are wearing, to the jewelry you are wearing, to the shoes you are wearing, to the accessories you are using the other is dressing to attract at each other and it happens and it may not happen and you can’t do that after a certain age because you have kind of been through all that.”)

(41- “I have been in many situations where I was a Director of Engineering at 29 and everyone else around me was in their late 30s and I was the only women among my peers, but you actually don’t think of gender specific issues there and you have a goal, you have a mission, you are stated and you go for it. One thing that I do is, other than in conversations like this when I am in a meeting I hardly have a conscious of the fact that I am the only woman. If I am doing we are putting together a conference, which is a very prestigious conference and so I am on their board of advisors which is listed in the board and there are probably like 22 members and I just saw that I was the only woman among that whole thing, it is like all the top executives and it was just interesting, once I go there the fact that I am a woman in a group of 21 of the men. When I am making a point I am not conscious.”)

Profession Stereotype

Some professions are stereotyped as profession for women and this creates the use of feminine advantage. (36- “I see it all the time I hate it. Using your sexual advantage is there definitely, but there is a kind of women who does it. It is getting to be less and it is getting to be less accepted as well, but it is definitely there and it is there in certain kinds of roles much more than it is in certain other kinds of roles, but hand and hand with that is also for example air hostesses are supposed to be pretty. There are some stereotyping about professions which require a certain kind of women, especially advertising, but it is also the most prevalent there.”)
Insecurity

The root cause was identified as insecurity. Since Indian women entered the professional arena later than their western counterpart, they are still learning the rules of the game.

(17- “Helplessness no and I don’t think you should do that. It is very easy to do that and it again comes back to what do I want in my reputation to be in the organization not one for crying for help each time to rescue, you don’t want but it wouldn’t stop you and sometimes you may use it depending on the circumstance, it may be an advantage at a particular time which you could use. Sometimes displaying your vulnerability or frailty can be advantageous, it’s true for both, men and women. The fact that there is frailty in all of us. It is in some ways, something that makes us appeals to people, you needn’t shun it.”)

(75- “I don’t think they do it because they are trying to use it, I just believe that Indian women in a professional context it is all about development of the species, so the Indian women has joined the workforce late, so she has to still develop that hardened male persona which doesn’t allow you to be weak. So what happens is while things are going well, then you are riding high and you are a career woman and moment the problem start all your insecurity surface, will I be able to manage it, someone else will do better than me and stuff like that. So then you become emotionally very vulnerable and then you sometimes dissolve into tears and feel very affected by something. One has to learn to control it, I don’t know I haven’t come across a lady purposely using that. I think at the end of the day when something like this happens when you go and confess to a male colleague or even a female colleague that you are not able to cope then you are left with a sense of shame, it is not a happy feel, so it is not something that you would do.”)

Organizational Culture and City Culture

The culture of the place and organizational culture tolerates certain behaviors and eschews some. (24- “I would say it is a rarity at higher levels. If I take the category of secretaries I have seen they like to use this, every day they will either turn up late, or go home early, oh! I had this problem at home
and you know I had to this and whimper. I have seen generally the bosses are pretty tolerant. I had worked for 9 years for a nationalized bank and that is where my career started. I was amazed there was a lady she used to be a teller at the counter, teller at the counter means handling walk-in customers, sitting and turning stitching a saree fall in the table on the counter. So, I was stunned you know and I said “You shouldn’t be doing this,” and her response to me was “What to do I don’t find time at home”. I couldn’t believe that. Nobody was finding anything untoward in what she was doing because I think in that kind of an organization.”

(87- “In Delhi they are extremely disrespectful of women. I am born and brought up in Delhi. On the streets, in an office, in a hospital anywhere you go and it doesn’t matter what age you are or what background you are, you have to constantly be on a self defense mode because you just don’t know how people are going to behave with you. Bombay, you don’t have to worry, even in Calcutta they treat you with tremendous amount of respect, I mean, you are getting into a bus or getting off a bus the conductor will start yelling 5 minutes before that there is a lady getting in or a lady getting down. So it is a very Delhi thing, they just don’t know how to respect women. When I came to work here 7 years back I was amazed at the difference in terms of the way women are treated. I think fundamental respect for human beings is high and when you get into a crowded bus here you don’t have to worry about you know somebody is trying to act nasty with you. In Delhi it doesn’t matter what age you are, so those kind of things it is a very city specific and that carries to organizations also. Our corporates can do so much, you can talk about the work culture. There is a huge bit of psyche change which has to happen; it has to start at the schools. All this gender diversity, managing and inclusive respect, equal opportunities…”

(72- “It is used because it is for two purposes one is to act helpless the other is that you know that because you are a woman you will get that advantage so if you be feminine your job gets done. In certain things they don’t allow us to compete so they are at an advantage there so why not use that is there definitely and the management also uses this. They say send a woman to get the work
done. Today also there was an article where they were saying in the sales girls who are being employed, they prefer the women because the customers who come preferred to be serviced by women, they like to look at them I believe!”

**Lack of Professional Attitude**

Women too have to conduct themselves in a professional manner, says a respondent. When they do not then they act like Cinderella.

("It depends upon how you conduct yourself on the floor. I am telling you I have seen lot of examples where women would come back from maternity and all that they would do on the floor is just talk about their child, their problems, what new thing it is doing. Out of 8 hours, ok it should be 5-10 minutes over a tea you can, but if most of the time you are just talking about that! What she is doing is thinking about that only. Another example- I have a colleague who is always talking about all these things, I sometimes have to tell her also, stop it! You should not just present that ‘oh my God I have so much of work’, ok fine you accept that as a way of life because that was your decision. You have to behave normal like how you were before maternity, you would not speak so much about your personal life so you should do that now also, so you should maintain that kind of dignity that is very important for women. I always had the fear that after my maternity of which is 3 or 4 months is lost, I mean you have to consciously make an effort to get back and I think anybody who would be on a long leave for 3 or 4 months will have to make a conscious effort to get back on the line.”)

**Social Etiquette**

Some respondents say that social norms also lay a certain pressure on women which makes them helpless and dependent. Also behavioural etiquette between sexes should be maintained or else there will be repercussions.

("It is social norm based, I think small things you know like ladies work late there are so many things to be taken care for them, they should be escorted to their house and somebody make sure that they have reached safe, but for a man it is not that .In fact if a lady travels with a male colleague and they have to get down somewhere close by, the male colleague has to drop her and then go..."
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back home so to that extent there is some dependency, the society is not safe. Helplessness is there a little bit. We don't travel much but travelling is not as much a problem as working late.”)

(99- “I see that in the office you can be as friendly as the next person is but then it can be misconstrued when it is a male. You know so one has to just be a little watchful. Yeah I think there is a little wariness on that front, if you are not married they tend to be more free with you and your behaviour is misunderstood, rather than when you are married. You can’t behave the same way as you would with the close female friend even though your friend could be a male friend. You have to watch out for certain things like you can go out and have a meal with a woman friend but you can’t do with a male friend. …..Only once, in the 20 years of my career, I had to complain about a little harassment and it was immediately taken care of. It was like a verbal thing. We all get to travel abroad quite a bit and I had this person constantly saying would you like to go here.. would you like to go there.. I said ‘lay off!’ He kept trying to coerce me….”)

Beliefs About Cinderella Complex

Some respondents believe that using feminine wiles is unethical and should be avoided while some others express that using feminine advantage is right. Feminine wiles must be avoided in professional setting 57- As far as I am concerned the women in me is only after I step out of this place, here it really doesn’t matter and that is how it should be, at work I am not here because I am not a woman or a man, it is what I deliver and it is what I do as a professional is respected.

(85- “In my view I don’t know whether to call it a woman thing or not, but I guess it is again driven really by a personal style, having said that should women be doing this or not my answer clearly would be no, should not be doing it.”)

(10- “In my own career I used to see women who used to behave like that, they may last for a while but not for too long. I don’t believe in it at all.
Women are more charming because they carry themselves better, but the women who use those wily ways get caught up at some stage. I call them floozies and fluffy. I believe people who are straight forward are genuine and especially in our business, long term relationships matter and that is what has been my success. Is that sense of genuineness and wanting to go that extra mile that comes on very clearly, and that warmth comes even in my personal life, one is professionally and one is personally. That is fluff, so that doesn’t last. Even guys can do that you know who suck up to their bosses and then they rise.”

“I agree. Yes, women do tend to do that but I would disagree completely when you say why not, I don’t think we should be doing it at all. I think it is our skills that should speak for ourselves not our femininity. It is an ethical issue because just the other day I had to hire somebody and this was exactly what this lady was trying to do and I said look I would have blindly hired her for what she has done in her career so far, if she had not used this feminine drama. Unfortunately I think she came across me. I was like livid because I said why did she have to do that and you know fine all of us men and women I think we are helpless, we do have issues, we do have certain compulsions, all of us do have that but then don’t use it as a leverage!”

“Maybe some do that but that is not the right way. I don’t like it. I don’t agree with it. It is not ethical and if we are helpless we take help like just any other male does, it is not that you are helpless because you are a female, you might be a male also and be helpless. So you consider yourself to be on par and even the other should treat the same way as a person. Feminine advantage should be used I think you should use it to your advantage, femininity should be used to advantage. Definitely, if I could smile and get something done, I will definitely do it.”

“You must use every advantage that you have, I believe in it strongly. I have myself used it this to my advantage because what it takes to get the work done. If acting helpless is what is going to get a certain person to do something fine I don’t have a problem.”

“For men it maybe a negative factor, they may view at it as a very
negative factor but for women it is definitely a positive factor, that is why I feel you know the role we play is so much more different compared to what a man because he cannot possibly act helpless or anything, we have plus factor in every way you look at it.”

5.8 Agency

The undertone of all the interviews is that Indian women executives feel that the onus to prove themselves and break through their constraints is theirs. This sense of agency is reflected in their narrative.

(49-“Exactly and today we women are not moving ahead it is because of our own insecurities, our own fears, our own anxieties, we keep reaffirming the stereotypes that are projected on us. Even if an opportunity is given, there is a lot of disbelief in ourselves whether I will be able to do it or not. I think the women psyche also needs to change. You cannot keep looking at the environment and blame the environment or the events or the people around you to say I cannot progress because of these hindering factors around me. There is something within you that should say that I have internal stability, that I can break it myself, I don’t need any help from anybody, that internal belief in oneself is missing.”)

(22- “Then of course which means that you have to be very strong and you have to stay with your belief and your vision and your goal and I mean it is not like even we have gone through it, we have got male managers. In fact the last male boss I worked with when I was handling a hotel launch in Bangalore he didn’t want to work with me. He knew that I would deliver, but he had this thing in the back of my mind ‘lets see how much she can do”. I have to ensure that I stayed with my beliefs and I didn’t get affected by his feedback all stuff. I know that his perception about me changed completely after that. But I had to stay with it.”)
5.9 Summary of Findings - Gender Bias

The quantitative and qualitative findings, presented in the domains of Layder’s model, are summarized below.

5.9.1 Context (Structural Bias)

The context refers to macro factors that form the given structures in society that enter into the organizational setting. While there are numerous socio cultural factors that constitute the underlying structure, only the relevant structures are considered to understand gender bias in corporate India. They are patriarchal attitudes and stereotyping. Patriarchy refers to ‘rule of the father/patriarch’. Indian social systems, with the exception of a few, are mainly patriarchal and so there is an ingrained concept that a woman must pay deference to her father, and later her husband, and must not step beyond the boundary prescribed by them (Sarshar, 2010). Responses of a few women executives, evidences the internalization of these values. However an awareness of this behaviour is also there showing that there is a reflexive process and it is not an unconscious internalization. Patriarchal attitudes percolate into organizational cultures too and define the setting within which the women executive has to deal with bias. Stereotypes are commonly held beliefs about men and women which are mutually exclusive. Gender roles create stereotypes. They also form the basis on which people are judged (Kelan, 2008). When women aspire for corporate careers or even seek jobs, they are transcending the prescribed gender role and this evokes comments and discrimination. Common stereotypes are that ‘a woman’s place is at home’, or that ‘working mothers are not good mothers’, or that ‘women are too emotional’, ‘they lack vision or risk taking behaviour,’ and ‘women will never be as committed to a career as a man and so they are unsuitable for the top positions’. Women executives report the presence of stereotyping but they do admit it is on the decline. Social changes wrought by modernization, westernization, and globalization are changing mind sets and that is visible in organizations too. The first generation of women executives say that there is a marked difference
in the social acceptance of working women for the next generation as compared to the times when they began their careers.

5.9.2 Setting (Organizations’ Cultural Biases)

The setting in Layder’s model refers to the more immediate environment, the work place, wherein their actual interactions (situated activity) take place. This micro environment carries the traces of the macro environment. It may not necessarily be patterned but it nevertheless defines experience. Organizational culture is formed by attitudes and beliefs of people working in them. The broader social beliefs enter organizational attitudes. Patriarchal attitudes and stereotyping create masculine cultures in organizations. These cultures favour men more than women and create a subtle and insidious barrier for women, called ‘cultures of advantage’. Heroic Masculinity refers to a culture which emphasizes achievement over nurturance. It is a culture which measures capability in terms of quantitative measures (hours spent at work, mobility, visibility, profits made etc.) and ignores qualitative measures (team skills, communication, communal and prosocial activities). It creates an atmosphere of competitiveness and aggression which is not conducive to women. The masculine culture also stereotypes women into a timid, submissive image and is intolerant to women who do not exhibit those qualities (Kanter, 1977).

Findings from interviews show the following:

• The bias of masculine culture in the organization is reported but it manifests more as a focus on performance due to the pressures of global competition and the recession in the economy.

• The patriarchal culture of the society which gets reflected in the organization as its members are conditioned socially to expect certain behaviours is also acknowledged by women executives as a reason for the masculine culture.

• 60% of the sample of 105 women executives believes that the bias of heroic masculinity is not present in corporate India. They opine that family friendly policies, holistic evaluations, equal opportunities provided by the organizations
make them people centric. They also say that quality of work is valued over quantity of hours spent in the organization.

- 24% of 105 women executives interviewed say they have encountered this bias but it is dependent on certain conditions like organizational history, number of women in the organization, organizational level and the wider culture of the place where the workplace is located. They feel it is also supervisor dependent and that once a women executive proves herself and gains credibility, she is unlikely to encounter this bias.

- 16% of the sample says that the bias of heroic masculinity definitely exists. Some of them consider it from a management point of view and say that the increased competition and emphasis is bound to create a more masculine culture. The recession and the pressure of increased population seeking scarce jobs in India, also heighten this competition.

- An industry wise analysis of the responses shows that the respondents who feel the bias does not exist are spread across industries (with the exception of shipping industry) evidencing that the bias of heroic masculinity is not experienced by majority of women, across industries, in India. Consultancy, Health, and Insurance sector report absolutely no bias. However the number of women executives interviewed from Insurance and Shipping industry is less than 3 and therefore any conclusion will be unwarranted. The Banking, Finance and IT industry which are heavily dominated by women in India and have a fair number of executives at the very top levels, report the existence of bias to a moderate extent. This can be because the recession which has put a performance pressure on these industries, making them more bottom line oriented and less long term oriented.

- An organizational level wise analysis of responses reveals that higher levels (very top include VPs, MDs, Country Heads, Global Heads, Directors, CFOs and CEOs) and top (General managers, Associate Directors, and AVPs) feel that heroic masculinity exists more than upper middle levels (Managers, Administrative executives and Senior managers). This could be because at higher levels the pressure of delivering performance increases and nurturing activities
may be relegated. As expressed by the women executives, the impact of competition, market realities and recession promotes the masculine culture.

- The impact of the wider culture of the place enters the organizational culture too. The women executives working in north Indian states of Delhi and Gurgaon report greater bias than the south Indian states. Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai have the maximum women executives who categorically deny bias. Mumbai presents a mixed picture with 45% reporting bias and 55% reporting no bias of heroic masculinity.

- (33%) of the respondents who identified bias said the culture of the organization, culture of the place where the offices are located and the overall culture of the country which is patriarchal create masculine attitudes in the organization. Market conditions like competition and recession, which force organizations to become more stringent about hiring, promoting and women and providing flexible schedules was also quoted as a major reason of the bias of heroic masculinity in the organization by (23.8%) of the respondents. Other reasons quoted were Individual factors like the personality of supervisors and the need to prove oneself in the organization before being accepted. Women executives said that both men and women have to prove themselves and that once they establish their credibility, the pressure decreases. They did not feel this bias is gender specific.

Cultures of Advantage - Masculine cultures create a set of norms which privilege men and disadvantage women subtly. These are called cultures of advantage. One such advantage, especially at higher levels is networking opportunity. At higher levels, this is an important skill on which women miss out and it consequently creates a set back while aiming for higher growth. Distinguishing between professional and personal/social networking, women executives speak of their constraints in professional and social networking. Responsibilities at home, social mindset which looks at intermingling of men and women with disfavor and personal attitudes prevent women from socializing and building contacts out of work hours or work setting. They also report that networking is important as it impacts performance in a career. It creates political suaveness,
5.9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - GENDER BIAS

aids decision making by creating access to vital information, increases comfort level within the group and sometimes networking with the top creates strategic visibility. In organizations with matrix structures, networking with peers is seen as strategic, by women executives. They also felt that reaching out to different stakeholders enhances performance. Women executives said since they cannot golf or drink with their peers, they found their own networking styles which are different from the men’s networking styles. They include lunch and breakfast bonding, shopping, email and videoconferencing, floor walks and being part of forums and (women only) networks.

5.9.3 Situated Activity (Experienced Bias)

The situated activity refers to the actual interaction that the actors have with their environment. It consists of the dynamic interaction among the colleagues, subordinates and bosses at work place and the woman executive. It takes into account the particular behavior or action of the woman executive and its effect on the interaction with the actors in the work place and home. Organizational cultural behaviours translate into specific biases which women executives, experience. They are Tokenism, Think manager-think male, Homophilly, Double bind and Attributing gender for success. The response of women executives to each of these biases is reported below.

(Think manager-think male- Leadership is always associated with men and so women leadership is considered out of place. Men react when a women manager exercises authority and outsiders also prefer to negotiate with a man as compared to a woman.

Tokenism- Being the only woman makes others react in stereotypical ways in meetings and in other interactions. Women who don’t conform to gender ascribed roles receive criticism and this is generalized to the entire sex. Such generalizations further consolidate the perceived risk of promoting women.)

- The gender bias of ‘Think manager, think male’ and ‘Tokenism’ is low in India incorporation.
• The bias of ‘Think manager think male’ manifests as reluctance to report to a woman boss or as reluctance among clients to interface with a woman manager. It is influenced greatly by social and organizational culture. Women executives do say it is negligible. There is no marked aversion to deal with women but there is hesitation. The impact of it is that women executives begin to adapt masculine behaviours and are often more aggressive than necessary.

• 95% of the women report that they have not encountered tokenism in organizations.

• The narratives also reveal bias when women executives said that they needed to prove themselves initially, to be accepted at higher levels. However they assure it is the same for men managers. The 5% who do report tokenism say it manifests as sidelining women or making them feel unwelcome or unnecessary in meetings. It can also be in the form of completely ignoring the woman executive or passing a few insensitive jokes or comments. Personality of few men was responsible for this bias and it was not generally encountered by women executives. In fact some women executives said they are treated with greater deference and respect and often get greater visibility as compared to their male colleagues.

• The correlation between the responses to Heroic masculinity and the resultant biases was also calculated. The degree of non parametric (spearman) correlation between the variables- Tmtm (“Think manager, think male”) and Tk (Tokenism) with Hm (Heroic masculinity) at significance level of 0.01, (2 tailed) is low, showing that Heroic masculinity in India Incorporation does not manifest as Tk and Tmtm. The correlation between Tmtm and Tk is slightly higher at 0.564.

• In terms of level in the organization, higher levels report greater bias (Hm- 26, Tmtm-4 and Tk 7) than lower levels (Hm- 5, Tmtm-0 and Tk 1). The sample of senior executives interviewed were classified as- upper
middle category (Managers, Administrative executives and Senior managers) which was 19% of the total sample of 105 women executives; the top level (General managers, Associate Directors, and AVPs) which constituted 26% of the executives; and the very top level (VPs, MDs, Country Heads, Global Heads, Directors, CFOs and CEOs) which was 55% of the total executives interviewed.

- The bias of Tmtm and Tk are reported only in Chennai and to some extent in Mumbai. The bias of Hm is reported in Delhi and Gurgaon to a greater extent as compared to other states in India

(Homophily – Top level perceives hiring a woman as a riskier decision than hiring a man. There a tendency of preferring people who resemble themselves, i.e. men prefer to hire men and if they deviate from this they have face peer pressure from colleagues.)

- The gender bias of homophilly is the tendency to prefer people who are similar to oneself. When asked about this bias, an overwhelming majority feel that they do not encounter homophilly in the organizations. 29% say a categorical ‘no’ and 44% say ‘it may exist in other organizations’. 27% say ‘it exists’ and quote various reasons for its existence.

- Women executives who said they encounter homophilly (27%), say it is natural to prefer people of your own sex. Some attribute it to the masculine culture. Age and upbringing impacts this tendency. Women bosses, they say can be exclusive when there is the ‘queen bee syndrome’. Diversity is seen as lip service as the number of women in top management is dismally low. Those women executives who say this bias does not exist (29%), explain the low number of women at the top with other arguments. They say that at the top level comfort is important, constant dissenters are counter productive, so top management chooses people who they are comfortable since capability is already proven by then. Some believe performance alone is the criteria and not gender. Some others say that the
low number of women at the top is because women opt out much earlier and so there is a reduced pool. 44% of the interviewees say they have not come across this bias in their organization but it could exist in some other organizations.

(Double bind – The adoption of a masculine style of management elicits complaints and feminine style makes people dismiss women managers. Communal qualities are expected and so agentic qualities are condemned)

• As far as the bias of double bind is concerned, 51% of the sample says that the bias of double bind exists, 28% are neutral and 21% believe it is not an issue. Some respondents were of the view that aggressiveness is a trait, which both and women need to use, and it is resisted by others. Women alone do not face any special censure when they are aggressive. They say that aggressiveness or non aggressiveness is a personal characteristic. As long as people accomplish their tasks, and they are capable, they get respect from others. Gender they feel, does not act as a factor in this. Some others expressed that aggression is not needed at all. Women and men who are firm are very effective leaders. It was also pointed out by a respondent that women have to transcend gender and look at others and oneself as a person.

• Those that say that the double bind exists, describe the ways in which they encounter it. When women are aggressive, it is not tolerated. Soft styles of managing are criticized as ineffective. Women are considered emotional. Women executives say that very often they have to play up to these expectations. They feel they are seen as women first, and a manager later. Women also feel that that they have to be exceptional to be accepted and so they have to prove themselves much more than men.

• Social expectations, stereotyping, organizational culture has a bearing on this. North India has greater stereotyping than the South of India. Individual maturity was seen as an important criterion in this bias. Some
women executives said men had big egos and that they are threatened by strong women, while a greater majority felt that double bind is internalized and women are defensive, over reactive, and aggressive. They felt that men are more balanced. They felt that women dislike confrontations and tend to bring their psychological complexes to work, more than men.

(Attributing sex as reason for success- There is a backlash from others when a woman is more successful than a man. Women have to face derogatory backbiting or nicknames in chat rooms. Women are suspected of using ignoble means when they succeed.)

- When asked about this bias, most of the women (57%) said that they cannot say anything about it, as they have not experienced it. 7% conceded it could exist in some organizations, but denied personal experience. 14% said a categorical ‘No’. They say that their organizations are open and supportive of women and 22% say that they have either personally experienced it or have seen a colleague go through it.

- Many of the women executives say that it is not successful women alone that attract criticism, even men face it. The criticism they feel is personality based and not gender. Some others felt that it is a general tendency to put people down if they are successful. Some women executives however, insisted that this bias exists and women get the back lash of criticism more than men. Women have their appearance being discussed far more than men.

- Women executives say that much of the calumny comes from women and not men. And this too is greater in social circles as compared to organizational circles. Jealousy is usually the cause of such slander. Women executives say that it does affect them. Many of them do not confront it. They also fear the social repercussions of such gossip.
5.9.4 Self (Internalized Bias and Agency)

The self relates to the individual’s understanding of his/her situation. In this case the women executive’s perception regarding her situation and her way of dealing with them, defines her ‘self’. The mental and physical strategies involved in dealing with the situated activity form her response to it. Women internalize the bias they experience from childhood. This devaluation gets internalized and leads to a lack of self confidence. Consequently, risk aversion and conservativeness in action develops. This can impact their ability to strategically envision the organizational action. Women are thus seen unfit for higher positions. Yet another, method of coping (identified in research) is called ‘Cinderella Complex’, namely using feminine wiles to get work done. Women executives were asked if they felt devalued.

(Devaluation- Constant devaluation and the attributing of a secondary role in family and society reduce the degree of self confidence women have.)

- Only a minority of women executives (9%) said that they felt devalued in their work place. 39% said a categorical ‘no’ and the rest (52%) said they personally had no experience of it but it maybe there elsewhere.

- Women executives feel that confidence issues do not exist for them. Self confidence is not gender specific.

- Low self worth usually prevents marketing oneself or demanding ones needs. Girls are socialized to be nurturing and sacrificing and this may be internalized.

- Women say they usually lack negotiating skills because they find it difficult to ask for a raise or demand a position. They expect to be noticed.

- Women are perceived to be risk aversive as compared to men. When asked about it, there are divergent responses. While some women executives felt they are risk takers, some others believe they are not and quote reasons for it.
• Another stereotype about women is that they lack vision. When asked about it women executives disagree about it.

• Devaluation begins at home, but most of the women executives say they received support from their families.

• Women executives say that by being in the corporate scene for long, skills are learnt. Be it marketing oneself or communicating one’s terms.

• Women executives say that women tend to look at their work as a job and not as a career and so this impacts their performance and rating.

• Women executives believe that mentoring has huge benefits for women and prepares them for higher positions.

• Using one’s feminity to further one’s interest, is a defensive strategy, used by women in masculine settings, according to research. The Cinderella complex refers to the use of feminine advantage. Women have a tendency to wait to be rescued. They use feminine wiles to get their job done.

• When asked, 47% of the women executives said they had either seen others using it or had used it themselves, while 17% denied the use of it. 36% couldn’t say anything definitely about it.

• Women executives say that they do not see the use of feminine wiles in organization. While some others say that it is not gender specific. Manipulation can be done by either sex to serve their own ends.

• Women executives who say that the Cinderella complex does not exist give reasons for their belief. One is that at higher levels, there is a greater need to perform. It may exist at lower levels but not at higher levels. The other is that by the time women come to that position, they are older and more matured in their attitude. They also stated that performance is the criteria at higher levels and not feminine wiles. Using feminine advantage at higher levels may work to the women executive’s disadvantage as the
competition is high and organizations are meritocratic in their culture and performance determines promotion.

- Some women executives say that the use of feminine wiles in corporate setting exists and they say it expresses itself subtly or grossly. Women executives cite multiple reasons on why the subtle use of feminine wiles is done and the forms it takes. Insecurity was identified as the main cause for using wiles. They felt it was unprofessional. Some women said the usage of feminine wiles will depend upon the city and the organizational culture. Some professions are stereotyped and these feminine strategies work in those industries (Air hostesses, for example). Age also was considered a determining factor.

- Appearance, emotional behaviour, and sweetness of manner were considered ways of using feminine wiles. Some women executives however said that there can be a much subtler use of femininity and gave examples of it.

- Some women executives felt that it was unethical to use feminine wiles, while some others felt that there is nothing wrong in using feminine advantages when men have so many other advantages.

The opinions of the women executives regarding the prevalence or experience of the biases are shown collectively in the following Figure 5.17.
Figure 5.17: Comparative chart of the prevalence of different gender biases

The analysis of the interviews and the statistical findings of the responses of women executives, taken together reveal the following.