

“Do you want the man in charge or...”:

Discrimination Experienced by Female Business Owners

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#### Abstract

Discrimination for women in the workplace is commonly described as the glass ceiling; however, this metaphor does not capture all women’s experiences. This qualitative study explored the ways in which female business owners navigate discrimination in male-dominated industries such as automotive, construction, manufacturing, and marketing. Interviews with four female business owners revealed a meaning-making process of denial/minimizing, a natural attitude, and what communication strategies they implemented in their specific organizational contexts.

## Introduction

The glass ceiling has been both an academic and nonacademic metaphor that captures women's experiences with discrimination in the workplace. The problem is that discrimination is not a static phenomenon that has a singular way to be dealt with because it changes with the context and it is communicated. Subsequently discrimination is at the heart of the glass ceiling; meaning we must understand how exactly it can change (Patton & Haynes, 2014). The glass ceilings discourse has led to examining the connection between women in management positions, the pay gap, and the fighting for career advancement suggests there is nuance that needs to be explored to gain a better understanding of the way in which this type of discrimination changes based on context and situation (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2014; Patton & Haynes, 2014). Gaining these nuanced explanations for discrimination and the resulting communicative responses may give us insight into pragmatic communicative strategies that can be executed to make a more equal workforce.

Indeed, examining the lives and experiences of women who have broken the figurative glass ceiling, by owning their own business, is a way we might begin to understand the interconnection between discrimination and the lack of vertical integration in the workforce (Hakim, 2004; Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2014). The way their strategies change the operation of their business provides a window to see the ways discrimination is experienced. This study also provided an opportunity for women to discuss the issues they have experienced with discrimination in their male-dominated field. Finally, understanding this particular groups experiences provides a conceptualization that expands the definition beyond the current approach to the discourse surrounding the glass ceiling and discrimination in the workplace by observing those who are perceived to have "broken the ceiling."

### **Literature Review**

Before we can understand the glass ceiling as it pertains to women business owners, it is important to provide a foundation of what that discrimination represents by first exploring the connection to the gender wage gap, how male dominated industries function for female workers, and what discrimination looks like for women in the workplace.

#### **The Glass Ceiling and Occupational Segregation**

Vertical occupational segregation refers to a phenomenon in which one group dominates the higher-grade and higher-paying positions and are more likely to be promoted to those positions. These types of segregated workplaces can account for a significant portion of the gender wage gap as men are more likely to occupy these positions. Examples of such board diversity trends show us that only 21% of white women are members of executive board seats and that number dwindles as only 18.4% of executive board seats are filled by African American women (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2016). Hakim (2004) claims that almost all the gap between men and women can be found in vertical occupational segregation. The Institute for Women's Policy Research (2014) concurs when it states that during the 1980's and 1990's, women's integration into the workforce was at its peak, there was a significant decrease in the wage gap (p. 1-2). Still, when considering whether horizontal or vertical is meaningful, we must consider that there is an earnings gap in median wages, regardless of whether the field is dominated by men, women, or is integrated and the largest earnings ratio for women is 71% of what men make in high skill labor male-dominated industries (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2014). Therefore, vertical occupational segregation is pertinent when considering the focus of this research for several reasons. Vertical segregation than can be seen as a form of discrimination that prevents women from achieving status, power, and authority (Hakim, 2004).

Historically this matches the metaphor of the glass ceiling. Specifically, the glass ceiling refers to an “inviolate barriers to woman’s career advancement” (Patton & Haynes, 2014, p. 25). This definition has come to include unfair hiring and promotional practices, but quantitative studies have not been able to capture some dimensions that prevent the vertical integration of woman in fields that were previously reaching parity between men and women (Patton & Haynes, 2014). Lemon and Parazinger (2001) wanted to explore this exact conundrum when they conducted interviews with women about their experiences with the glass ceiling in the information technology field. The interviews revealed three inter-connected factors that were preventing women from climbing the occupational ladder. The three barriers they identified that women experienced as a glass ceiling were educational/family characteristics, corporate cultures, and sociological factors (Lemons & Parzinger, 2001). Educational and family characteristics referred to covert discrimination that was experienced as a child since they are female. This socialization included deincitivizing girls to excel in math and science. These types of gendered socialization factors were consistent in many other studies as well (Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, & Haslam, 2014; Lemons & Parzinger, 2001; Wrigley, 2009). The most pertinent example of discrimination that caused a glass ceiling was the corporate cultures that promoted men over women. Researchers found that many times women were not given a chance to even prove themselves because male managers would overlook them when deciding team leaders on complex projects. Dismissals and the overlooking of the women, even when they are the most qualified in the department, prevented them from being considered for promotion (Lemons & Parzinger, 2001). Women in male-dominated industries, then, might expect to experience more discrimination in male-dominated industries.

### **Women in Male Dominated Occupations**

Understanding the perceptions of what is occurring within these corporate cultures offered an understanding of the nuanced way the glass ceiling can be maintained within these companies. One such example was whether women in female dominated industries such as public relations perceived a glass ceiling and how those perceptions turn into strategies to negotiate said discrimination. Wrigley (2009) set out to look specifically at public relations and communication management which had been coined as “the velvet ghetto” because of its concentration of women workers at the bottoms of these firms (pp. 33-39). She developed the negotiated resignation model to explain how the glass ceiling was created and maintained by women in these positions. The five factors revealed by Wrigley (2009) for this model is comprised of denial, gender role socialization, historical precedence, women turning against women, and corporate culture (pp. 37-40). Each of these factors accordingly shapes the perceptions of why these women could not advance and, in many cases, would blame the culture and environments they were in.

Negotiated resignation model is a foundation that has been used to explore other disciplines. As such Whiteside and Hardin (2011) discovered many of the women, in sports broadcasting, would give detailed accounts of discrimination that they stated could be connected to gender, but many would deny the existence of gender altogether or, then, to blame women for their own shortcomings in the industry. The denial and blaming work together in this framework because they produce a result where acknowledgment of gender, even as a strategy to develop solidarity, would mean recognizing that the women do not embody the qualities needed to advance in their own career. Many would even attribute that to the fact they were working in a masculine environment and deemed it that they were expected to act as such. Essentially,

operating as a coping mechanism by which the discrimination was maintained and rationalized away ignoring potential perspective of individual choice (Caven, 2006; Whiteside & Hardin, 2011). Thus, a clear discourse about what is choice and what is preventing women becomes more important than blaming a perceived lack of motivation among women to advance.

Val Caven (2006), recognized this disconnect and focused on women working in male-dominated occupations may actually be experiencing and their choices (pp. 41-43). The notion of a false consciousness was a worrying concept for that was the trend that women were not experiencing vertical integration due to a rejection of the traditional male model of occupations. Caven (2006) found that many had chosen alternative lifestyles actively because of their occupational life. The themes that emerged was an embrace of alternative lifestyles because of a focus there being more about life than work and secondly a rejection of the traditional feminist theory. Thus, a problem was revealed about focusing on feminist analysis without understanding woman's choices (Caven, 2006; Hakim, 2004; Whiteside & Hardin, 2011; Wrigley, 2009). This is not a dismissal of feminist analysis on the topic or to suggest discrimination is not occurring. Instead, the debate should focus on changing to perception surrounding what is considered meaningful and real work rather than maintain that women should want the traditional male model of work-life (Caven, 2006). To gather a better sense of what is happening regarding my focus on women-owned business, it is important to understand when women are promoted to leadership or leave to make their own organization.

### **Women in The Workplace**

Women who have reached the upper echelons of a business rather than simply working for the company may be a valuable intersection to view how discrimination is experienced differently. For example, the glass cliff is when a woman or minority is chosen for a promotion

during a time of crisis forcing them to face challenges that their white male counterparts would not (Bruckmüller, et al., 2014; Cook & Glass, 2014). What was discovered is that these appointments serve several purposes. Role expectations for women or minority leaders are considered better other implications suggested that they are chosen for their ability to be a scapegoat.

Furthermore, there is a suggestion that female leaders signal a sign of change and that the current approach is not working whereas before the choice of a woman leader was “unthinkable” (Bruckmüller, et al., 2014). Also, there is acknowledgment that during the tenure of an African American individual any successful leadership qualities are negatively evaluated. Resulting many times in their tenure ending early and a white male replacement must “save” the organization. This was deemed the savior effect (Cook & Glass, 2014). One consideration might be that individuals are aware of this and prefer the non-male work lifestyle.

This establishes a concern about when women are promoted but do not answer why women leave to make their own businesses. Mattis (2004) presents a study in which women were cited to leave due to lack of flexibility, perceived discriminatory barriers, and a lack of challenge. The lack of flexibility is raised as a question when considering the rejection of the male-model of work (Caven, 2006). The perceived discriminatory barriers are found in a range of studies that present them as glass cliffs as well as gender socialization and corporate culture (Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Cook & Glass, 2014; Lemons & Parzinger, 2001; Wrigley, 2009). And the lack of challenge could be connected similarly to what was found by Lemons and Parzinger (2001) when they discovered many women would be overlooked for complex projects. Overall, it seems that these characteristics are consistent whether women choose to find a way to handle discrimination in the workplace or set out on their own. Which leads us to need to explore

whether women who own businesses experience similar outcomes as business owners as those who remain in the workforce as an employee. Thus, a more thorough exploration to provide a nuanced understanding of how status and context in the workplace changes experiences with discrimination is imperative.

### **Female Leadership Communication Styles**

Hippel et al. (2011) attempt to address how the context of leadership and particularly how stereotypes affect female manager's communication styles. Understanding that female leaders face potential discrimination they found that the female facing stereotyping attempted to adopt a masculine communication style and risked social penalties. One penalty was perceptions of appearing less competent. The strategies used were viewed as a demonstration in how female managers contended with discrimination in the form of stereotypes (Hippel et al., 2011). Furthermore, research on linguistic styles suggest that woman leaders tend to be stuck in a double-bind between embodying both feminine and masculine styles. If they adopt a feminine style of communication that stereotypically corresponds with their gender, they are characterized as less competent. If they adopt a masculine style of communication, they face the social penalties of not being feminine enough (Oakley, 2000). This disadvantaged status can be carried with them even when promoted into leadership. Then the question becomes about women who have been successful in the face of discrimination. Therefore, understanding their success relies on their how they apply meaning to discrimination and what communication strategies they use to navigate those experiences. Thus, I propose the following research questions:

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What meaning are women business owners in male dominated industries attributing to the phenomenon of discrimination?

RQ2: What communication strategies, if any, emerged from their perception of their experience with the phenomenon of discrimination?

## **Methodology**

### **Approach to Inquiry**

I utilized phenomenological approach that to explored discrimination as a phenomenon, and specifically how multiple female business owners shared experience of discrimination can reveal an ‘over-all essence’ that describes their experience (Creswell, 2013). Particularly, how their perceptions and attributions of discrimination help them understand the discrimination. I considered how that translate directly into their behavior and how they navigate those experiences. Meaning that understanding how they communicate during discrimination was key. Gaining an insight into those strategies, attributions, and implementation gives insight into the meaning-making process these women used. The disparate situations experienced by these different business owners will provide a greater understanding of the way in which discrimination manifested and what meaning they placed in it as they achieve their goals. This phenomenology attempts to place emphasis on discrimination to gain greater understanding of how a group of these women all experience the phenomenon to describe a common thread (Creswell, 2013). This strength of phenomenology to understand across multiple individuals was a key reason for why this approach was chosen.

### **Participants**

I utilized a criterion sample that focused on individuals who meet the criteria of someone who owned/co-owned a business, identified as a woman, and worked in a traditionally male-dominated industry. The criteria traditionally male-dominated was determined by asking whether the owners perceived their industry sector as male-dominated. male-dominated industry was

conceptualized as industries in which men were perceived to outnumber women at all levels of employment. Recruitment of the participants was done through a Midwestern Universities business internship office who initially reached out to organizations owned by women. A total of four women participated. All the women identified as white/Caucasian and had varying levels of education with one who completed some college ranging to two women with Masters Degrees. Ages for the women ranged in category from 25-34 to 55-64. The women had a combined average 10.5 years owning their organizations. The participants spanned four different industries: construction, automotive, manufacturing, and marketing/sales.

### **Data Gathering**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted their own office settings owned by the business owners. The interviews lasted 31 to 51 minutes long with an average of 39 minutes long. Understanding the nature of their work allowed them to control the interview in ways that lent itself to their discretion as discrimination and more particularly the results of discrimination can sometimes be sensitive discussions. The professional atmosphere though may have led to some less than desirable answers when discussing topics about the organization they currently operate.

To curb these types of apprehensions I asked life-history of the interviewee where they could reveal relevant information pertaining to who they are as a person and how their business came to be. Taking this approach revealed itself as fruitful as it allowed for us to explore their preconceived understandings of discrimination. I then shifted to asking about their experience with the phenomenon, exploring what it looked like, when it happened, what meaning they apply to it, and how it has affected their life personally. The final section of the interview they then pondered on how these experiences related to meaning they personally apply to ideas of

discrimination such as the glass ceiling or breaking the glass ceiling. These lines of questioning were revealing in the way they thought about discrimination and allowed for a rich understanding of how their experiences with discrimination matched their explanation of how they dealt with it as an owner.

Furthermore, a brief demographic survey was given at the beginning of the interview process to capture demographic information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to gain better understanding of their meanings.

### **Data Analysis**

I employed analysis described by Creswell (2013) as a type of thematic analysis described by Moustakas (1994) in which the researcher describes the identified phenomenon by developing themes (pp. 80-83). The themes will be developed through a whole-part-whole process. The process consisted of a thorough first reading before highlighting significant statements in the second reading then holistically looking for clusters of meaning that can be developed into themes used to create textual and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Vagel 2016). The lived-experience many times when viewed through different perspectives may allow for manifestations that were revealed to expose some implications that have been discussed and theorized to better understand the validity and reliability of the research.

### **Validity**

Two strategies of validation I employed in my research to help provide validity were rich-thick description and clarifying researcher bias via bracketing. Rich-thick description will be employed “to allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability” which allows for the interconnectedness of the work to be seen (Cresswell, 2013). Detailed descriptions of the participants, settings, and sticking close to the original words and meanings of the participants as

possible will provide the necessary information to move from general to specific in my findings. Finally, I employed bracketing which is the process where the researcher tries to remove themselves from the study by discussing their experience with the phenomenon. This strategy serves to give the readers an idea of the researchers own bias, allows the researcher to situate themselves in the study (Creswell, 2013). And I accept its impossible to remove all understanding of the phenomenon from the study provided a chance to identify suppositions I have when describing discrimination.

### **Analysis**

The first set of analyses wanted to address my first research question was what meaning were the differing women business owners attributing to discrimination. Consistently through each interview the women business owners would make statements that the discrimination being discussed either did not matter or did not occur. Although, by the end of the interviews participants had conceded that it has happened but minimized its importance to themselves or continued rejecting that it mattered. Each individual participant would recall specific events of discrimination. The participants revealed this contradiction I described above in how they perceived what the discrimination meant to either themselves or others, but would apply their own internal attribution about its importance. Therefore, their interpretations were evaluative and value-laden in nature when discussing how they approached discrimination versus how they actually experienced it. Two key themes were revealed by the participants: denial/minimizing process and the “just natural attitude.”

The interview revealed a process of justification that would occur in which the women would preface that they had not experienced discrimination but then would proceed to give an example. Such as Lindsey who stated, “I have never experienced anything because I am a

woman, but during college I found myself getting pushed toward the major I graduated with by counselors and friends.” She then described that her major as nursing which was acknowledged as stereotypical female occupation. All participants described the phenomenon of discrimination differently but went through a process of denial/minimizing and then later attributing it to an “it is just ‘natural’ attitude.

### **Denial/Minimizing Process**

The first step that began to emerge was a denial/minimizing of the meaning of the discrimination. The participants would conceptually place the discrimination between denial and a minimizing of importance of the events they discussed. These were attributions that were not outright rejection that discrimination had occurred but instead that it simply did not matter or that it only happened to others because they had achieved success. This step was important because the participants understood discrimination had occurred because they would attempt to deny or minimize the way it effected their day-to-day life. Thus, enlightening other themes and how discrimination was understood by this group of women business owners. The process supposes that they seemingly did not want to be formally addressing the issue as a form of discrimination. Which meant that attributing meaning does not matter to them and seemed to allow them to ignore it if they chose. When Joyce discussed the glass ceiling she acknowledged it when she said, “I know it was there but it didn’t bother me... [its therein] different ways, shapes, and forms but it just never affected me.” Others expressed similar outright denial but then would provide examples of times that could be attributed to discrimination after the denial.

For example, after denying experiencing discrimination Lacy replied “No, I haven’t yet but I also haven’t gotten into the government contracts.” Then would continue to explain situations such as her husband’s old construction company he worked for found out that the

company was going to prevent them from reaching out to vendors because of what was described as a “good old boy game” which Lacy explained was that if you are going to start a woman owned company then we are not going to let your “girlfriend swing on the swings.” Her interpretation of these events meant that Lacy was suggesting they meant that if he was going to start the business with his wife at the lead, a woman, then they could no longer be allowed to compete due to their advantage with government contracts. Contradictions such as these seemed to cause some cognitive dissonance that would then be restated as not important because it did not stop them.

The meaningfulness of discrimination then appears to be bound to how systematically it prevents them from accomplishing a goal rather than simply barriers that prevent a level playing field. Lacy for example stated that any situations she described as discrimination were “not [barriers] at all” and “there’s always little things you know like well you can’t do that you’re a woman type of thing and those are little things. I mean it’s not a big deal.” Perl expressed a similar perception when hearing “There’s always little things you know like ‘well you can’t do that you’re a women type thing you know,” but would apply the caveat of “Those are little things. I mean it’s not a big deal.” These are attempts to minimize the meaning and importance specific types of discrimination because they did not stop them from achieving their goal.

Instead, these would be attributed to a specific type of attitude.

### **The “Just Natural” Attitude**

The next step that emerged was the concept of a natural attitude. The participants would express this theme once they had realized there were different perceptions about experiences they had received. The expression of the it is just ‘natural’ attitude was that there was nothing unordinary about the experience and that there was a deeper level of innateness to their

experience. All of the participants would express to one degree or another that their experiences were determined by a quality that was inherent to who that person is, being female. Thus, much of the discussion centered on gendered difference men and women. Examples of the just natural attitude were typically revealed explicitly such as when Perl stated:

There was many times that gentlemen would walk up and say I need to speak with a man I want to talk about the frame or I want to about the suspension you know... and there was some who simply did not want to talk to a lady.

Other examples of this attitude could be found when Lacy said "I believe that naturally a man's instincts... are different than a woman's." She also stated "I'm just going off my gut instinct. I think if I was a woman owned company and I had all women that work for me in construction I don't think I would get nearly as many jobs." The explanation offered would be that they believed in a biological determinism that resulted in discriminatory behavior and that individuals drifted to gendered expectations based on some type of innate quality. They were treated as such because they were a woman and that it did not matter.

This sentiment of naturalness was echoed in my interview with Joyce where she discussed this interaction with customers; "You know I would very much encounter customers [who] would come in when I'd be working in the service area and say I need to speak to them. The man in charge of that." These types of explanation come from an attribution to their socialization and were commonly made throughout all the interviews. Joyce specifically explained:

Just growing up in that family business and knowing that it was their intention for me wasn't to be [involved with the business because I was girl] and I bought in that just being a kid thinking. Even at the time it was just normal life.

Joyce's explanation added a layer of the natural attitude that started as a child when receiving discouragement because of the type of work the family business was. These types of explanation seemed to enforce an idea that if "this is just how it is" then the expectation and meanings of discrimination seem to feed into needing to use denial and minimizing attribution. The implication then was that she was supposed to be doing other types of work or pursuing other goals. The relationship becomes that the participants attribute the natural attitude because of their upbringing and that these were natural occurrences and did not feel they were discriminatory in nature even though retrospectively identifying it as such. Thus, they perpetuate a cycle of denial/minimizing that was occurring during the interviews.

The attributions and meanings developed into several strategies that were described when explaining the discrimination, they experienced. How did they deal with these events in terms of how they communicated about them?

After, discovering how they applied meaning to discrimination it was important to consider how they navigated those experiences. What communication strategies, if any, had emerged from those perceptions. Those strategies include qualifying language, surrogate communication, and building mentoring relationships.

### **Qualifying Language**

The theme of qualifying language came in many forms but was a consistent tactic found when handling discrimination that the participants experienced. They would lead with who they are, prove their qualification, or ask permission to prove their authority over their own business.

One example of this type of strategy included when the participants explained how they constantly had to prove themselves as competent Joyce stated, "Do you want to speak to the man in charge or the women who knows what's going on?". She explained was a consistent utterance

to men who would come into her business. Perl, also, when she said “I can answer those questions for you and if I can’t there is a gentleman who can... I should know those answers because I am the owner. Why don’t you give me a chance?” to men at trade show who would open with asking where a man they could speak to was. Also, Lindsey even suggested that her experience using this strategy was weekly when she explained:

So, I experience on a weekly basis that people say well ‘hey I have more experience; I should be qualified for this or that or we didn’t do this way in my old position.’... I have to explain why why why.

Each of the participants would talk about this as an approach that would eventually let them “bulldoze” or break through to the men who treated them unfairly.

### **Surrogate Communication**

Surrogate communication referred to a strategy that when the participants experienced explicit discrimination they would offer to alleviate that with providing a male to speak to. This communication strategy accomplished two goals: it would allow individuals who discriminated a choice to reflect on what they were saying and it served as a tool to disarm the discrimination. Perl explained that if someone demanded to talk to a man that she would open with qualifying language but provide the caveat that if they want to speak to a male they could. Joyce expressed that she was taught to run a business from her aunt was from the background “[Some days] she would have to definitely be the brains behind it and then get her brothers geared up to go present or do things,” explaining that they were the face of the operation most days because no one took her seriously. These offers to provide someone else are well connected with the qualifying language they both serve to seemingly disarm the consumer, client, or employee.

### **Mentoring relationships**

Another tactic that was described by all the participants was building relationships with women who could help mentor and navigate similar struggles they were experiencing. Lacy for example would describe all the struggles they found setting up the business and gaining capital. This eventually led her to seeking out organizations and mentors who could help guide her. She explained as such, “[the organization] was for women only. It was a woman owned business entrepreneurial place. Since the business was structure to be owned by myself and not my husband it got us off the ground.” Others also described similar experiences such as family or women who they worked with as providing them the insight they needed such as when Joyce said:

[My Aunt] definitely was the brains behind the operation and you know she had a lot harder time than I did actually breaking through. Should have to definitely be the brains behind it... So, she was definitely my role model or mentor.

Lindsey described the success of her mentors and how that played a major role in how she approached any challenges’ including discrimination. The adoption of mentoring seems to be a clear way to navigate any potential negative results due to experiencing discrimination. The participants seemed enjoy relying on other women to help when others did not. This strategy is very effective and has been a central tenet of much of feminist thought.

Overall, the strategies together seemed to directly address the ways discrimination had been attributed. The denial/minimizing that occurred alongside the natural attitude about gendered discrimination all culminated in these core strategies that would allow them to make choices step around the barrier of discrimination.

### **Conclusion**

Participants in this study displayed a contradiction between how they experience discrimination in the work place and how they discuss approach handling it. Many of them stated that they did not attribute what was occurring to them as discrimination and at the same time almost immediately giving an example of what they felt was discrimination. This revealed the theme I labeled as Nope, I have never experienced that, but... and it manifests in two interconnected ways. First through a process of denial and minimizing then justified through a natural attitude giving almost no meaning to an innate quality that is to be expected as a woman to experience. I would contest that the experience of the women business owners is uniquely different than that of those described in much of the literature.

As business owners and supreme authorities in their businesses the very context and type of discrimination they primarily described was functionally and structurally different than anticipated. When developing their attributions and meanings for the discrimination they would primarily discuss experiences they had with individuals outside of their organizations; their socialization. Consumers had become the primary source of discrimination meaning the barriers they encountered were not from inside the organization. They need those discriminatory consumers in order to be successful. This is distinct from past research that points to the authority and discrimination primarily afflicting women in the workplace comes from within the organization even when they are CEO (Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Caven, 2006; Lemons & Parzinger, 2001; Whiteside & Hardin, 2011; Wrigley, 2009).

Hakim suggested the primary objectives in women reaching parity is to gain these levels of authority, power, and status but it seems instead what occurs is that the primary barrier shifts from one stakeholder to another (Hakim, 2004). This revelation may not seem particularly

ground breaking but it has several implications. Such as that the problem of discrimination does not stop once one “breaks the glass ceiling” and becomes a business owner. Instead, a shift in the cultural understanding of women at work is needed as well.

Thus, strategies will be important as more women business owners begin to grapple with these topics. The use of qualifying language served the purpose of displaying and explaining their credentials, and that they are the authority of their own business. Which suggests that the negotiated resignation model is correct. Wrigley (2009) suggested in her analysis of negotiated resignation that historical precedence about who is an authority and power may play a huge piece into how women view their current situation (p. 46). Specifically, Wrigley (2009) states that “women in [her] study realize that men have traditionally been in power and made decisions about who will assume positions of power” (p. 46). Meaning that while Hakim (2004) is correct in her assumptions about vertical integration it seems that in the context changes once those positions are achieved.

Similarly, when turning to the use of surrogate communication is an acceptance of the facts of the situation. Which as Wrigley (2009) quickly points out is that the women business owners have recognized a perceived advantage in the gendered differences (pp. 45-46). Many of the women accepted through minimization and denial that these differences were not a concern when it came to discrimination because many may have been evaluating the gender role socialization was more valuable than acknowledging the need for change. Surrogate communication as described by Perl and Joyce opted that biological determinism had its benefits. Thus, the men who worked for them solved what was a seemingly trivial problem. Which allowed them to control their environment rather than changing the larger cultural system.

Where my analysis of what occurred differences heavily from Wrigley's (2009) model though is corporate cultures. The distinct advantage the women who owned businesses in my studies displayed was the awareness that their organization was potentially different from that of other businesses because of their mentoring they received. Joyce explained the ways she witnessed her aunt run the business and Lacy connecting with women who understand the unique challenges of women owned businesses. Which suggests that by having their status and vision at the top things would be different such as what occurred in Perl's shop where half the manufacturers are women now. Suggesting as I pointed to earlier that the primary barrier is no longer a glass ceiling but instead the authority gap and how they manipulate their own workplaces.

In summary, the negotiated resignation model works well to help explain many of the items of discrimination that occurred but is less useful because the discrimination has shifted from internally preventing them success by obtaining status, power, and economic parity to external factors that are much harder to control. The use of qualifying language and surrogate communication specifically are great evidence in how the denial and minimizing of discrimination is due to recognition of potential gendered advantages. Finally, those gendered advantages continue to be implemented but continually changed as the women shape their organizations in a more egalitarian fashion. Future researchers though should be encouraged to concern themselves with the concern of race as a factor in better understanding how intersectionality might apply more deeply to the handling of discrimination by women of color who own their businesses.

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