

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Does the Modern Woman Have it All? Has the role of the working woman changed since the feminist revival in the 1970s, and if so, how are societal pressures affecting modern day working women in globalised Australian society?

LIFE UNDER THE GLASS CEILING- THE WORKING WOMAN AND HER WORK

In the 1970s, women entered the workplace in increasing numbers. The Whitlam government ruled that women doing the same job as men should be paid the same wage, encouraging the percentage of female participants in the workforce to rise to 33% . Despite this seemingly judicial advance however, many women were discriminated in the workplace. In interview A, the woman explained that many women could not escape the confinements of the traditional gender stereotype.

The working woman in interview B too agrees with this view and believes that society discriminated against women by making them progress with tasks completely unrelated to their profession. This discrimination can also be seen in the large pay gap between the two genders where women earned approximately 59 cents for every dollar earned by men in 1970. Thus, in the 1970s where women would take 5 steps forward in terms of flourishing in their newfound liberty; they would also take 10 steps backwards in terms of how society adapted to these changes.

In today's society, women in the workforce is considered the norm, it is easy to assume that women are now dominating the workplace, rising in both rank and responsibility, but in reality how much has changed?

Women's pay is still not equal to men, with ABS figures released in 2011 showing that women earn 83 cents for every dollar made by males. Additionally, 44% of men and adolescents who completed my closed – ended questionnaire believed that women experience inequality within the workplace. In the 1970s, the rationalisation behind women getting paid unequally in comparison to males was based on the fact that women were typically in more low paying occupations, such as secretarial work. However, women now have the freedom to pursue any career they like. My own mother is a real estate agent and my peers have mothers who are in careers that range from law to fashion. Thus, discrimination of women in the workplace is still evident as women are paid less for doing the same occupations as males.

Although secondary statistics are very reliable, my own primary research can be contrasted to its findings quite significantly. In the focus group I conducted with modern day working women, all 5 participants felt that they have never experienced discrimination or inequality

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within the workplace. Although, the women stated they have at times felt subjected to prejudice, they had never experienced the active version of prejudice, that being discrimination. It is interesting also that even though 44% of the men and adolescents who did my questionnaire as illustrated in figure 1 believe that women experience inequality in the work environment, only 21% of women who did my questionnaire felt this was the case. It is noted therefore that the conclusions made by men and adolescents are based purely on perceptions rather than experiences, thus demonstrating that the majority of women feel they do not experience inequality while working. It can be concluded that men and adolescents gain their perceptions from the influential nature of the media that through globalisation have been acculturated to believe incorrect or sensationalised experiences concerning working women. Therefore how is the power of the media influencing women in their participation in the workforce?