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Man-Made: Why So Few Women Are in Positions of Power
Cordula Barzantny

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About the reviewer

Elisabeth K. Kelan was a Lecturer in the Department of Management at King's College London at the time this book review was submitted (19 October 2010). The review reflects the state of research in 2010. Elisabeth K. Kelan is currently Professor of Leadership and Director of the Global Centre for Gender and Leadership at Cranfield University. Elisabeth K. Kelan can be contacted at: elisabeth.kelan@kcl.ac.uk

Man-Made: Why So Few Women Are in Positions of Power

Edited by Eva Tutchell and John Edmonds

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This title is a very timely one stating the history and present of working women in Great Britain. Eva Tutchell and John Edmonds offer a comprehensive overview of the challenges women in the UK have faced and are facing still today in society and the workplace. It addresses particularly the issues for those women who show ambitions and who want to be successful in a world mainly designed and organised by men. The authors, a man and a woman, have interviewed more than 100 successful women and a handful of men, both in positions of power in the UK. The authors offer the account of women in Great Britain who succeeded in organisations and system that were initially created and preserved for the convenience of men (man-made!). Those women decided how they can best obtain success to move up in the organisation to a position of power. Power is about equality. More women want to decide how they can best contribute to organisations and systems in order to fit in, having a career and go to the top, some are

even attempting the monumental task of reforming the system to fit the needs of women. The research was intended to identify a possible pattern emerging from the stories and life experiences of successful women in the man-made society. The successful women interviewed talked about their obstacles in the way of ambitious women but also suggested how those man-made obstacles could be overcome or circumvented. The book gives a great account of the still too few success stories of motivated women in Great Britain and pins down the gap to equality still lacking until today.

The authors have organised their research with different themes across 12 chapters, giving a complete overview of the conditions of women in power from the past Victorian times to today in Great Britain.

Every chapter is provided with notes at the end of the book which give further reference and useful material. A select bibliography is well furnished in order to offer complementary study and to support the empirical findings. A useful index is closing the book.

The authors demonstrate with their research that progress towards gender equality is still glacially slow. Their aim for this book was based on the positive approach to show what can be achieved by some women who have enough determination and drive to confront and overcome barriers. This is a first step towards ensuring that the power of successful women is fully employed to enable other women to achieve success.

This title is essential reading for everyone who has an interest in gender issues and developing a more equal society. It should be essential reading material for any person in corporate, public organisation or politics, notably in the UK, but also beyond since it offers key recommendations for decisive change.

Sometimes, the reality, the authors listened to in the open interviews, was simply appalling regarding sexism and harassments several women lived through.

The book has its origins in the UK's General Election of 2010, where the political game and results were only male. The first chapter gives a broad overview on the "Illusion of continuous improvement" showing how few have been accomplished regarding the equality of women in all aspects of society.

Despite the two laws passed in the UK since the 1970s, the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, the advancement for true power sharing with women is still not equal.

The second chapter (titled "Outnumbered") shows that neither laws has been properly enforced, which contributes to the lack of progress for more equality and power for women in society and the workplace in Britain.

The third chapter ("Fashioned by men") explains the traditional role model for women and men in British Society since the nineteenth century. Since those times men formed the structure of many institutions and organisations enduring still today. Gender stereotypes are still lasting and very slow to change across society.

Why are so few women in positions of power in Britain? This is the underlying core question for Eva Tutchell and John Edmonds throughout the book.

Following the historical analysis of the previous chapter, the fourth chapter ("Fitting in") presents the subtle pressures on women to become like successful men around them when they also want part of the power at the top.

The fifth chapter on "Sexism and Discrimination" displays that no steady progress was made when no continuous, powerful movement exerts pressure in the last 100 years.

The sixth chapter tackles the issue of appearance ("How women are seen"), the still far more important factor for women compared to men.

In the seventh chapter "How women are expected to behave" is treated an even more important dilemma for women: she is either disliked for toughness or judged for being too weak, lacking ("male-like") leadership qualities.

The eighth chapter discusses “The maternity wall”, because maternity acts as a barrier in every woman’s career. This is particularly linked to the “traditional” career expectations assumed as continuous without interruptions.

The last part of the book focusses on what can and should be done to overcome the various obstacles, identified through the many witnessing life stories, and to remedy what is considered as unfairness in British society.

Therefore, the ninth chapter “Secrets of success” opens some of the secrets of the success of ambitious women who finally have attained positions of power.

In tenth chapter on “Slow and unsteady progress” the authors examine the commitment of governments to enhance the equality of power for women in British society with more women in senior positions and on corporate boards supporting economic growth. Interestingly, these gender equality aims stem again from a rather male, narrow-minded perspective on improved decision making and corporate performance, instead of a larger view on bringing benefit to the other female-half of the population. As the authors wrote: “The opportunity to undertake rewarding and fulfilling work improves the quality of life for women as surely as it improves the quality of life for men” (p. 12).

There is need for workable policies to achieve those stipulated equality of power outcomes for women and men which involve significant cultural change. The authors consider the possibility that true gender equality can be achieved by a slow and steady process.

Therefore, the authors give ten key recommendations for reforms in the 11th chapter on “The glass ceiling and beyond”. Those, to be carried out in a reasonable time frame of not more than one generation, go from the better reinforcement of key legislation, for a greater transparency in appointments and pay, the introduction of quotas (see the positive example of Norway by Wang and Kelan, 2013), targets and internal equality programmes in companies, public sector organisations and in parliament to the introduction of a work break scheme.

The 12th and last chapter is titled: “Reports on the demise of feminism have been greatly exaggerated”. It gives a final overview on the state of feminism across times in British society and identifies clues to build a powerful, cohesive and persistent campaign through the persuasion of political parties to take gender equality seriously for changing the fate of women in Britain.

A certain limitation of this book is certainly the focus on the situation of women in Great Britain alone. Nevertheless, this in-depth study of the British gender issues adds a precious piece to the understanding of possible reasons for the lack of power of women still today, not only for the UK case. The perpetuated discrimination and exclusion women face in man-made societies has been circumvented and overcome by those positive examples of women interviewed, thanks to whom the book could be written. The title shall stand as improving motivation for all women (and men) to hopefully increase the speed of change and better identify the triggers for it.

Various literature references, quotes and notes also show the connections with the international body of literature on gender issues.

A unique feature represents the duo of the authors of both genders with very different experiences: Eva Tutchell, Advisor and Expert for gender equality and a former Secondary Teacher and John Edmonds, a Trade Unionist, for nearly 20 years, General Secretary of the GMB Union in the UK, he also served as TUC President.

Their collected accounts offer an excellent and thorough state of the women’s situation in the UK and a stringent call for action on true gender equality of power to

advance business and overall society. Their interviewees give useful input through their life experiences condensing into the ten recommendations the authors offer as practical guidance.

They conclude that this can only be done with great determination and though the exercise of considerable political will.

At no point does this comprehensive book gets tedious in any of the examples and stories that are told, the length and format are truly appropriate.

The reader gets a rich overview on reasons for the unfair balance of power among men and women in Great Britain with barriers for women as well as possible ideas and policies to overcome those. Another core feature of this well-written title is the joint authorship of the two authors for most of the chapters except one, compared to other recent titles which are edited works with a variety of contributors (e.g. Burke and Major, 2014).

At a maximum cost of £45 for the hardcover version this book is realistically priced and provides excellent food for thought and practice, therefore it appears like a good value.

Cordula Barzantny

Toulouse Business School, Toulouse, France

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About the reviewer

Cordula Barzantny is a Professor of International and Intercultural Management at the Toulouse Business School, France. She received her PhD from the Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Social Sciences Toulouse I, France. Her research interests are in cross-cultural management, leadership and diversity on a global scale but with a particular European focus. Cordula Barzantny can be contacted at: c.barzantny@tbs-education.fr

Gender and Leadership in Unions

Gill Kirton and Geraldine Healy

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The overall objective of this book is to explore the experiences of women union leaders in the USA and UK, and to build a network to nurture leadership development and further explore an international women's agenda. Kirton and Healy suggest that women have largely been absent from industrial relations (IR) scholarship. IR researchers have tended to focus on the class struggle, with an analytical emphasis on institutions and structures. The traditional symbol of the male blue collar worker