



## Women at the top leadership positions. Obstacles, possibilities and the chimera of segregation

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### Abstract:

The paper takes into account the general characteristics of workplace organization, the organizational atmosphere relevant to gender and prejudices based on binary oppositions identified by women in leadership positions, which still limit their opportunities and choices.

Career paths of women are at the focus of the study, especially in academia and science, including the difficulties faced by women when they move up in the organizational hierarchy, if they pursue career in science and if they aim for the leadership position.

*“Most of us spend most of our days in work organizations that are almost always dominated by men. The most powerful organizational positions are almost entirely occupied by men, with the exception of the occasional biological female who acts as a social man” (Sorenson 1984 quoted by Acker 1998: 139).*

## 1. Introduction

There are still a lot of female workers who, despite their qualifications and skills, encounter obstacles in their careers. Although it can be established as a fact that the proportion of women leaders in the developed countries has increased significantly in recent decades, this change has not reached the top-level leadership positions where women continue to get into only sporadically (Monori, 2011, p. 145). For instance, despite changes, Hungary has only ranked 103<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking of the *Global Gender Gap Index 2017*, which analysed and compared 144 countries, inter alia, on the basis of the gender inequalities in economic participation and opportunities<sup>1</sup>.

In Western Europe and North America, women's higher inflow into the labour market began in the 1950s. At that time, the segregation of the labour market as a topic appeared in research as well, and from the 1970s more and more studies dealt with it. It could be seen that women's and men's work status and opportunities to reach higher positions were completely different (Nagy-Primecz, 2010). Joan Acker showed that work organizations are not only intertwined by gender issues (Kanter, 1977), but *“they are based on a gendered substructure (Acker 1998)”* (Nagy 2017, p. 59).

What is currently at the forefront of the problem is that more women have been placed in leadership positions than before, so it may seem that the system is fair right now and that advancement is based merely on merit, and the hierarchy seems easy to permeate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf) last download 30.04.2018.

<sup>2</sup> See also Vida-Kovács 2017.



One of the questions to be answered in the 1990s, and what this writing is about, was the question of why this change is so slow for women's proportions and why the role of women in top level leadership is symbolic, despite the fact that they have the same qualification level and skills as their male colleagues, and the proportion of women in higher education is higher than that of men (60-40).<sup>3</sup>

The current state of affairs is clearly due to gender segregation. Women are burdened by both vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market.<sup>4</sup> By horizontal segregation, we mean the different positions of men and women in different economic fields, sectors, occupations, which are referred to by the *glass walls* metaphor.

Vertical segregation, which is replaced by the term *glass ceiling*, includes opportunities for advancing on the occupational hierarchy. The phenomenon that the proportion of women is significantly lower when we look at higher positions. That is, even with the same professional skills, women have a much lower chance of a career than men (Hymowitz–Schellhardt, 1986). The term *glass ceiling* first appeared in the literature in 1986 when Carol Hymowitz and Timothy D. Schellhardt made a report titled *The Glass-Ceiling: Why Women Can't Seem to Break the Invisible Barrier that Blocks Them from Top Jobs* in the Wall Street Journal.<sup>5</sup>

The reasons for this uneven situation and the segregation at workplaces are in the social codes, can be found in the centuries-old presence of the male–female hierarchy. It is known that a series of social endeavours, multiple feminist tendencies and initiatives have appeared to change these, that is to “overcome” prejudices about women. They are united in similar and / or different ways in order to stop biological gender dictating social roles. In other words, both genders should be able to take part in professions or roles they like or want. The key to the ability to do so is in the individual and is not narrowed to the roles determined by the biological gender. However, habits, traditional gender prejudices are deeply embedded in the social sphere, and they directly or indirectly determine the place of women regarding their role in society.

“In the labour market, as in other areas, the psychological explanation of such gender-based differentiation focuses, therefore, on the perceived incompatibility of myths, that is, what it means to be a good leader and what it means to be a woman (defined as opposite to each other) and it is known as ‘think manager–think male’” (TMTM) (e.g. Agars, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975 quoted by Ryan, Haslam & Hersby, 2011, p. 470). “The ‘think manager–think male’ (TMTM) association is based on gender inequalities at work.”<sup>6</sup>

*“That is, men’s stereotypical attributes are much more overlapping with the notions of a leader (Schein, 2001; Heilman, 2001) than stereotypes about women. It is, therefore, difficult for women to gain access to these high status areas with political-economic powers and prestige, because these prejudices make women less likely to be fit for these occupations”* (Vida-Kovács, 2017, p. 145).

Gender-related segregation of the labour market is linked to such and similar social value judgement and therefore means a social problem. As “the principle of meritocracy (if we emphasize gender equality) or the special contribution and value of women (if we keep in mind the differences between the two genders) cannot be realized” (Nagy-Primecz, 2010, p. 14).

The topic includes the already mentioned horizontal segregation, the changing but sharp separation of the feminine professions versus masculine professions. It is known that women are overrepresented in the social sphere, but there are still few in the technical and natural sciences.

According to Katalin Koncz, however, the separation of the numbers by profession is not unnatural because of the different competences and opportunities of women and men for biological and social reasons.

<sup>3</sup> See also Nagy-Primecz 2010.

<sup>4</sup> International comparative analysis show that gender segregation of the labour market is present in all countries of the world and continues to be stable (Anker [1998], Charles [1992]), „despite the fact that there is an approximation in women and men’s different approaches to the labour market and their education” (Koncz 2010: 1083).

<sup>5</sup> Although the metaphor of the glass ceiling goes back to the 1980s, but earlier research, like the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter *Men and Women of the Corporation*, in the 1970s showed how different their positions are and what women and men can do in organizations (Kanter 1977) (Nagy 2017: 60).

<sup>6</sup> In addition, let’s just think that, for example, care, which is regarded as a part of women’s nature on a biological basis by society, cannot be transformed into social status at all. But the care from women is needed by the dominant group – preferably without remuneration – so it has become part of the „expectations” of the female role (see Glick–Fiske 2006 quoted by Vida-Kovács 2017: 143).



She suggests that basically it is not the segregation that actually causes inequalities (Koncz, 2011). At the same time, I mention here, “*that the essenceist argument on the difference between men and women nevertheless maintains paradoxically the hierarchy it seeks to break down. It reaffirms the category boundaries between groups and the assumption that members of the groups – irrespective of the nature of the assessment – are essentially different*” (see Phillips 2010 quoted by Kovács- Szabó, 2017, p. 44).

Anyway, the problem, as Koncz says, is rather with labour market mechanisms<sup>7</sup>, that shape these natural differences and the resulting occupational structure as a social disadvantage (Koncz, 2011, p. 75).

Meanwhile this is significant as the jobs done by men get higher prestige. In addition, the difference is also reflected in the salary, which is between the female and male professions, to the latter’s remarkable advantage. The topic here is only affected by the fact that there are few women in managerial positions, whether in female or male professions or sectors. It is proved by men being leaders even in an industry or organisation overrepresented by women. For this phenomenon, the literature referred to as the *glass elevator / escalator* as opposed to the glass ceiling, which women experienced in men-dominated occupations.

Aida Harvey Wingfield describes in her study entitled *Racializing the glass escalator: Reconsidering men’s experiences with women’s work. Gender & Society (2009)* all men who work in female or women dominated professions feel this particular glass escalator effect. This is what makes their quicker upward mobility on the echelon easier even in these areas (Wingfield, 2009). The glass escalator model was thus an effective paradigm for understanding the experiences of men doing female jobs.

The concept itself was created by American sociologist Christine Williams in 1992 in the article titled “*The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the ‘Female’ Professions*”, and was identified in her research of male nurses, social workers and librarians. The metaphor was identified as evidence of consistent male advantage in these workplaces. That is, even in jobs where men have numerical minorities, they are likely to receive higher wages and move faster on the ladder than female employees (Floge & Merrill, 1986; Heikes, 1991; Pierce, 1995; Williams, 1989, 1995 quoted by Wingfield, 2009, p. 6).<sup>8</sup> Williams has since revived her own phenomenon in *The Glass Escalator, Revisited Gender Inequality in Neoliberal Times, SWS Feminist Lecturer (2013)*.

In the scientific discourse, a number of studies dealt with the glass elevator phenomenon she created, “*The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the ‘Female’ Professions*” has been mentioned in dozens of textbooks, quoted more than 500 times in scientific articles and appeared in other places about the subject (Williams, 2013).

As it has been discussed above, there is a Chimera of problems that women face during their careers, which is supported by patriarchal traditions from all sides.

This paper takes into account the general characteristics of workplace organizations, their atmosphere and prejudices based on binary oppositions identified by leading women, which still limit them.

The career path of women is the focus of the study, more specifically the difficulties they encounter when they move up the employment hierarchy, or if they want a career in science, a leadership position.

## 2. Chimera of segregation

My starting point is, therefore, that since the 1950s, the modernization of organizations did not solve the problem in women’s career. Furthermore, we are not merely talking about one or two obstacles, but we are faced with an extremely complex, multifaceted phenomenon. Despite the fact that women are overrepresented in many professions (even in formerly male professions, such as a lawyer, a doctor) and, as I mentioned

<sup>7</sup> This is confirmed by the latest North American research. These show that men with an active, intense father role report the same degree of work-life conflict as the active mothers in the labour market (Williams et al. 2013). Williams and his associates approached the issue of why organizational practices are not questioned from organizational engagement rather than organizational structure (Williams et al. 2013). In North American research, a summary shows that the moral expectation of commitment to work conflicts with the general need for a worker to work flexibly, even if the class attributes are taken into account (Williams et al. 2013)” (Nagy c2017: 65).

<sup>8</sup> Mostly white men in women’s professions meet the glass escalator phenomenon, which helps occupational mobility (for exception see Snyder and Green 2008), but few studies deal with it being not only a gender advantage, but also a racial privilege. (Wingfield 2009:6).



in the introduction, the proportion of women leaders in the western states has also increased considerably, but these numbers hide the fine details that prove what difficulties and choices a woman has to face to have leader, top level, decision-making positions. No matter which organization we consider, within each of them “there are everyday habits and processes that reproduce inequalities, reinforce and present stratified inequalities as unequivocal. ... The result of the process is the unquestionable nature of the situation” (Nagy, 2017, p. 59).

Listing and describing these processes and phenomena can help in making solutions. For this reason, additional metaphors have been added to the above-mentioned *glass ceiling*, *glass wall*, *glass escalator* to further refine this complex phenomenon and to ascertain the number and magnitude of the problems more accurately. Thus, in addition to the concepts described above, symbols such as *glass cliff*, *labyrinth*, *critical mass*, *queen bee*, *gate guard*, *Matilda effect* etc. have appeared. Although not all of them will be detailed separately, but the list of obstacles will include the content of each metaphor.

To sum up all this, the fundamental problem is that the obstacles behind these attributes still (1) cause great difficulties for women in their progress (2) or stop them forever in their self-fulfilment in the world of work and science, leading to their dropout.

### 3. Self-discrimination and labyrinth

“Vertical segregation causes, for example, that women themselves do not choose certain occupations, jobs, or fields of science, even though they may do so, that is, they may be victims of ‘self-discrimination’” (Anker, et al., 2003 quoted by Nagy & Primecz, 2011). Thus, the glass ceiling phenomenon can be read about in the study “Women and Men in the Organisation – An Experiment to Dispose Myths”(Nők és férfiak a szervezetben-Kísérlet a mítoszok eloszlatására), it is not necessarily an external, objective obstacle, but rather an internal one, and therefore it may also create a semblance of free choice. By all means, it further justifies my conclusion that the segregation factors are extremely close and mutually interrelated. But what matters is that women get stuck somewhere in their careers (Nagy & Primecz, 2011).

For example, a more adequate term for the problem is the so-called labyrinth. This contemporary metaphor illustrates the difficult journey full of conflicts that is waiting for women during workplace advancement and a career. “Passage through a labyrinth”, as Carli-Eagly write in the study *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, “requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead. Because all labyrinths have a viable route to the centre, it is understood that goals are attainable.” According to Carli-Eagly, “if we can understand the various barriers that make up this labyrinth, and how some women find their way around them, we can work more effectively to improve the situation”(Carli & Eagly, 2007).

### 4. What obstacles is the labyrinth built of?

The present paper has already listed some of the obstacles women face. Below I specifically name these, highlighting the specificities of academic careers.

Carli and Eagly identified four well-defined obstacles in the study: (I) the disadvantages of prejudice, (II) the refusal of women’s leadership, (III) the problem of leadership style, (IV) the difficulty of reconciling family life and career (Carli & Eagly, 2007).

Beáta Nagy furthered these barriers and divided them into (1) prejudices, (2) questioning women’s competence, (3) the lack of supportive leadership style, (4) the difficulties of reconciling work and private life, (5) the lack of social capital, (6) the fact that scientific career is created to fit men, (7) the Matthew-effect and (8) the Matilda-effect, (9) the fact that men’s self-esteem is generally higher and women’s is lower than their actual performance, (10) the role of the media, (11) the “chilling climate” and (12) “benevolent sexism”.<sup>9</sup> These are detailed below, although not in this order. I put the obstacles in two groups, those that typically occur before breaking the glass ceiling and those that threaten women who are already in leadership positions.

<sup>9</sup> See also: Áttörni az üvegplafont, kijutni az útvessztöböl – Nők a tudományban kerekasztal az Akadémián [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/attorni-az-uevegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanybankerekasztal-az-akademian-107103](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/attorni-az-uevegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanybankerekasztal-az-akademian-107103) last download 04.30. 2018.



## 5. Obstacles before the glass ceiling

As it has been mentioned several times, prejudice, social codes, that is, the fact that women and men behave, speak differently, etc., and thus have a different role in society, is one of the cornerstones of gender-related myths. In practice, they are most likely to be found on the labour market and, as Beáta Nagy points out, they are reflected in the first salaries after graduation (*gender pay gap*). In science, it can be observed after obtaining a doctorate, mostly in the United States. It suggests that this phenomenon is present at the academic level as well. The paper titled *Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues* published in the 2017 November issue of *Physics Today* collected the reasons and phenomena that may be the backbone of wage differences among scholars.

Among other things, it was stated that among academics in the USA, but also in some countries of the European Union, there is a clear evidence of gender-based discrimination. “In physics men earn, on average, 18% more than women, according to a survey by the Statistical Research Center (SRC) at the American Institute of Physics. The survey looked at people who received their physics PhDs in the US in 1996, 1997, 2000, or 2001. After accounting for other factors, such as employment sector, postdoctoral experience, and age, a 5.7% disparity persists. That difference is attributable to sex, says who analysed the data. The model says that if we have two people who are identical in every way, the woman will make, on average, 6 percent less than the man” (*Physics Today* November 2017) “A host of observations and studies boil down to two contributing factors in the pay disparity. The first is that women don’t negotiate as aggressively as men. The second is that men favour each other, which affects recommendations to serve as an editor or chair a committee”, which will initially lead to higher salaries (*Physics Today*, November 2017)<sup>10</sup>.

In Southern European countries (the same as in Hungary) it is not possible to talk about salary differences for professors, since salaries are set nationally. “So the problem is not in comparing salaries, but rather in comparing career progression” and its time comparison. Thus, after all, the difference in pay in this case is that women in a lower status earn less money.<sup>11</sup> “For sure men have a faster career, and most men entering the profession reach the top, they become full professor. Women more often get stuck, typically at the associate professor level. The reasons”, as the paper has suggested, “are rooted in deep cultural patterns.” (See: Whitten, Foster & Duncombe (2003) *Physics Today*, September p. 46, and see: August 2005, p. 29).<sup>12</sup>

It is also closely related to the question of the competence of women in certain (prestige / and / or good-paying) professions. One of its visible forms already appear during the job interview. However, very few studies have been written about women’s (and men’s) behavioural attitudes and language use in job interviews despite the fact that the first major step in career development is the job interview.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Daniela Wawra’s book *Männer und Frauen im Job Interview (2003)* is extremely interesting, which states that men and women differ significantly in their language use. These differences were also described and explained interdisciplinarily by linguistics, social sciences, genetics and evolutionary psychology, as well as from an economic point of view (examining English language and culture). She argues that basically these are the reasons behind the discrimination. The paper also pointed out that there is a risk that women, particularly due to their language use, suffer discrimination during admission talks. As a result, it also has an economic issue, as these organizations can lose those who are objectively the best for the job. This can be the case because most HR managers do not know the differences in language between men and women, so the language use of applicants is often measured in male “norms”, and differences are usually interpreted as weaknesses of women. (see also “white solipsism”<sup>14</sup>) However, if they were already aware of the gender-based differences in language use, they might

<sup>10</sup> Feder, Toni(2017):Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues <https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/PT.3.3760>

<sup>11</sup> Feder, Toni(2017):Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues <https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/PT.3.3760>

<sup>12</sup> Feder, Toni(2017):Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues <https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/PT.3.3760>

<sup>13</sup> **Source: Frauen und Männer verhalten sich im Bewerbungsgespräch unterschiedlich**<http://www.uni-passau.de/bereiche/presse/pressemitteilungen/meldung/detail/frauen-und-maenner-verhalten-sich-im-bewerbungsgespraech-unterschiedlich/>last download 05.01.2018.

<sup>14</sup> Williams mentions the concept of “white solipsism” by Adrienne Rich (1979), the notion that *white* experience is the norm, average and model of all other groups. If others differ from the white norm, they are considered as „exceptions” Williams 2013).



be able to avoid rejecting those who are professionally the most suitable candidates for that job and can significantly increase the competitiveness of an organization.<sup>15</sup> This further justifies the argument that merit is counted only after the matter of sexuality (even if the stereotype is present indirectly). Beáta Nagy's research also underpins the results of social psychological studies that it is not based so much on individual abilities as it is on social conditions that a higher number of women become leaders (Nagy, 2005).

The judgment of performance, therefore, often differs at the two sexes. This is further substantiated by the so-called Goldberg paradigm that was named after Philip Goldberg's 1968 experiment. During this, two groups of students had to evaluate the same essays, the only difference being that once a man, then a woman was named as the author. The result showed that the aforementioned deep-rooted gender prejudices blurred the objectivity of the evaluator in the end. Except for the traditional women's themes, texts with the woman's name (which was the same) were evaluated worse than the ones with the man's name (Riedel & Schiessel, 2011). The results, therefore, basically show that the works assigned to women are rated more negatively than men. (see JK Swim, Borgida, Maruyama & Myers, 1989; Heilman, 1983; Nieva & Gutek, 1980) (Burgess-Borgida, 1999, p. 671).

Nóra Séllei, in her work *Women Professors at the University of Debrecen*, presented the research done at Yale University in 2015 which showed "that university professors working in a committee that evaluated applications – women as well as men – consistently overrated applications that had a man's name on them, compared to those applications which had a women's name. As the researchers conclude... it is not about conscious misogyny, probably not even conscious discrimination, but the resulting effect of the stereotypes that society expects about women's roles. In other words, it is about the cultural subconscious, that is affected by the hidden curricula of our socialization. However, from this aspect, it might be less unambiguous to declare that scientific career and advancement would be solely based on the principles of meritocracy" (Séllei, 2015, p. 261).

At the same time, we must not forget that in social contexts, the only major component of evaluation is not only sex, but prejudices are created by the interaction of several factors. For example, physical competence, speech communication, non-verbal communication and other stereotypes (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). But in several cases, (see also an ideal worker), however, gender is the main basis for discrimination.

For women, the most complete obstacle of the labyrinth is the **difficulty of reconciling work and private life**, which is always a double burden for women. This is basically based on the pressure of family responsibilities, namely that "women continue to be the ones who interrupt their careers and work part-time" in case of childbearing. As a result, they will have less work experience, which will significantly slow down their career progress and reduce their earnings (Carli & Eagly, 2007). But it is true that there are solutions to this, "e.g. in the Nordic countries that were studied by Billing, part of the gender regime is that parents are jointly responsible for child care, so one parent cannot be considered as completely unencumbered" (Billing, 2011; quoted by Nagy, 2017, p. 65).

But, as the previous study revealed, in many places, such as in the United States (but also in our country), even those women who have shared nursing with their husbands,<sup>16</sup> or other family members, etc., did not enjoy the full benefits and opportunities at work. Decision makers often assumed that mothers are inadequate for challenging positions due to their household / home responsibilities. "*There were 2 or 3 names [of women] in the hat,*" – said one of the workers in Carli and Eagly's research-, *and they said, 'I don't want to talk about her because she has children who are still home in these [evening] hours.' Now they don't pose that thing about men on the list, many of whom also have children in that age group*" (Carli & Eagly, 2007). *Thus, childbearing as a specific female "problem" – says Nóra Séllei, comes from the fact that our culture tends to take the mother's primary care role granted.* The professor's own experience shows that male colleagues are almost never asked

<sup>15</sup> Source: **Frauen und Männer verhalten sich im Bewerbungsgespräch unterschiedlich** <http://www.uni-passau.de/bereiche/presse/pressemitteilungen/meldung/detail/frauen-und-maenner-verhalten-sich-im-bewerbungsgespraech-unterschiedlich/> last download 05.01.2018.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth mentioning how important the partner is from a career perspective „The longterm effects of spousal support and personality on the professional success of respondents, that is, the special appearance of the crossover phenomenon, was analysed through Australian panel data by Solomon and Jackson(2014). The indicator of subjective success was satisfaction with work and the objective success rate was income and progress. Their data showed that regardless of whether a male or female subject was examined, the personality of the spouses had a significant effect on the performance at the workplace (Nagy 2016: 123).



about the number of their children, nor how they reconcile their family and career (Séleli, 2015, p. 270). Thus, basically, the traditional conflict of roles, career or family, specifically affects women.

This is closely related to another problem. According to Beáta Nagy “for example, in the presentation of a family-friendly organization, women are not presented as fully capable employees, but ones requiring help from the workplace, emphasising the notion that women with children need constant assistance in the organisation, otherwise they will not be able to perform” (Nagy, 2017). On the other hand, either we take flexible work or part-time jobs – they place women on a ‘mommy track’, meaning they are secondary workers, less committed to their jobs... “ (Nagy, 2017, p. 64).

Accordingly, the **ideal worker** is in any case an *unencumbered* employee. Literature (Acker 1998) also calls this a *disembodied* worker, whose shape is naturally close to a male worker. For this reason, those who have any educational, caring responsibilities and who are predominantly women, are excluded. According to the model, therefore, employment is a male norm, since it basically makes a system of expectations tailored to men (Acker, 1998; quoted by Nagy, 2017). What it is about is that “*the concept of a universal worker excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man*” (Acker, 1990, p. 150 quoted by Nagy, 2017, p. 64).

From the “invisible” segregation based on prejudice, it is also necessary to distinguish visible, **physical segregation as a further obstacle**.

This is basically a component that plays an important role in workplace organizations in redistributing positions. The basis for this is that men tend to spend a lot of time building up their professional relationships. Thus, this factor becomes an essential part of their work. Some researchers base this phenomenon on human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Blau & Ferber, 1992; quoted by Dreher, 2003, p. 543). As women collect less social capital than men, they are less likely to be in a leading position (Dreher, 2003, p. 543).

According to Alice Eagly and Linda L. Carli in *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, social capital has become an essential part of job advancement. “This suggests that social capital is even more necessary to managers’ advancement than skilful performance of traditional managerial tasks” (Carli & Eagly, 2007). So executive nominations are made in closed circuits, in the “*old men’s club*” (Nagy, 2017).

It has long been recognized that in science the phenomena of uneven distribution of nominations and rewards among scholars is common (Zuckerman, 1970). This is the so-called “Matthew effect” which (in general) means that “eminent scientists get disproportionately great credit for their contributions to science while relatively unknown scientists tend to get disproportionately little credit for comparable contributions” (Merton 1968). So ultimately, the rewards are distributed among people who have already been recognized (Lincoln, et al., 2012).

Merton used the text from the Bible, “*for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away*” in his science sociology. Today, this concept is used to describe phenomena where the advantage of favoured groups is reproduced by institutional systems, so they gain additional benefits while the disadvantages of the less favoured people continue to grow.<sup>17</sup> As far as our topic is concerned, it means that women are the ones who are excluded from most rewards.

In addition, women’s scientific efforts are depreciated compared to men (Long and Fox, 1995). While, for example, the open discrimination in the American society is declining, most of the research in social sciences has shown that women’s work and results are considered less important or valuable than men’s (Goldin & Rouse, 2000; Heilman & Haynes, 2005; Wenneras & Wold, 1997; quoted by Lincoln, et al., 2012, p. 308).

This latter phenomenon was first identified by Rossiter (1993) and called it the “Matilda effect”, according to which women’s scientific work and results are often attributed to their male colleagues or ignored completely. In this case, it is important to note that research has shown that not only men have gender prejudices. In fact, both men and women appreciate men more than women, even in the same performance (Correll et al., 2007; Steinpreis et al., 1999; quoted by Lincoln, et al., 2012, p. 308).<sup>18</sup>

This is closely related to the fact that **men’s self-esteem is generally higher and women’s are lower than their real performance**, which can lead to worse results. Mara Cadinu, Anne Maass, Alessandra Rosabianca, and Jeff Kiesner conducted tests on the subject. Their results were summarized in the study *Why Do Women*

<sup>17</sup> See also: <https://miau.gau.hu/mediawiki/index.php/Máté-effektus> last download 05.05.2018.

<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon resembles the above-mentioned Goldberg paradigm.



*Underperform Under Stereotype Threat? Evidence for the Role of Negative Thinking.* Among other things, it was stated that negative thinking is one of the possible reasons for deficits in performance. Women under the phenomenon called *stereotype threat* (while they had to complete a difficult math task) showed a sharp decrease in performance, which was the result of negative, domain-specific thinking (Cadinu et al. 2005, p. 576).

However, not only the negative, but the positive sex categories keep women in their traditional roles as well. This is the so-called *benevolent sexism*. The problem with this phenomenon is that women only become accepted in the eyes of society if they have feminine characteristics specific of the group. At the same time, these are completely incompatible for leadership features (see leadership attitudes below).

The above-mentioned reasons and their various manifestations are, therefore, still present predominantly and hinder in the career path of women. All these difficulties are further strengthened by the male environment, the “chilling climate”. This is based on the fact that the majority of men at a particular work organization creates a “foreign” atmosphere for women entering into, either with the characteristics of the group or the physical segregation associated with it. Beáta Nagy summarises the situation that women are confronted with when entering the male world in her book *In the Background (Háttérben)*. Among other things, she highlights, for example, Gherardi’s typology of women travellers in a male world, distinguishing their positions as “the guest”, “the marginal”, “the holidaymaker”, “the snake in the grass”, “the newcomer” and “the intruder” (see also Czibere & Takács, 2016).

Furthermore, even in the Faculty of Humanities, which is considered feminine, the same phenomenon can be experienced. Nóra Séllei’s research based on deep interviews with humanities students found that respondents say this is still a field of “knights”. Interviewees felt they needed a separate communication strategy to fit in that world (Séllei, 2015).

## 6. Beyond the glass ceiling....

Above I have listed the obstacles present before acquiring a leadership position. But the difficulties are not even close to the end. Women who have been able to get out of the labyrinth or break through the glass ceiling are faced with additional difficulties. Such an obstacle is the so-called *glass cliff*.

Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, Floor, Haslam & Alexander studied this relatively new form of gender discrimination in *Beyond the Glass Ceiling: The Glass Cliff and Its Lessons for Organizational Policy* (2010). According to this, the *glass cliff* metaphor refers to the difficulty that women have to face when they acquire leadership positions. Such leadership positions are often much riskier and uncertain than men’s. Moreover, according to the phenomenon of the glass cliff, the nomination of women was only possible because of the risk or uncertainty of the organization’s position. That is, the nomination of women was often a response to a perceived future failure or crisis (Brückmüller, et al., 2010). Thus, as I wrote in the introduction, the existence of women leaders suggests that the system, the hierarchy is permeable, so the fact that it is not can only be visible from behind.

To sum up, nowadays the majority of society recognizes women as good professionals, they are considered as suitable for many positions as men. But in most cases, not leading roles, so important, responsible positions are still assigned to men.

This resonates with the bureaucratic relationship of expertise and discipline. Which sees the individual attributes as the ideal type of a good leader (of course, they are men). It is true that, on the basis of the Weber’s interpretation, the rule of expertise and bureaucracy mean the same, but according to Parsons, – who describes that Weber confuses the dominance based on professional competence with a moral responsibility based on a legitimate office, – in the management of organizations, administrative and official positions are not necessarily filled with the ones with the strongest professional competence. For example, in a healthcare institution, for example, the best doctors are left in the healing process while the administration is entrusted to serious officials (Czakó, 2011, p. 13).

Thus, it is also possible that not necessarily the best professionals are hired at the Academy of Science and higher educational institution’s positions, but mostly men (from the club) will be elected based on lobbying, the abovementioned habits, the Matthew effect, and the categorization based on other gender stereotypes.

This fact is further substantiated by the research by Nóra Séllei, who studied women professors at the University of Debrecen, and found that in some fields, for example, there is no woman at all among the leaders.



*“The University of Debrecen has some “university” faculties (although this is no longer a legal category), which has not appointed a woman professor until now” (Séllei, 2015, p. 267).*

As management requires essentially male attributes, and leadership attitudes are masculine attitudes. In addition, the paradox situation is described by the study *The token situation and the illusion of meritocracy: the exception strengthens the rule? (A token helyzet és a meritokrácia illúziója: a kivétel erősíti a szabályt?)*, “women who do get leadership positions will typically be in a token position in high status – “manly” – areas, but this will not reduce prejudices against them, but increase them due to the intensified stereotyping” (Vida & Kovács, 2017, p. 145).

For this reason, they start to behave like a “man”, that is, trying to adapt to their new roles by picking up masculine attributes. Thus, as a combined effect of the token situation and the chilling climate, assimilation can be interpreted as a phenomenon among the women leaders.<sup>19</sup> Which, in turn, leads to a displeasing result. Since the traditionally masculine leadership style is seen as a negative value judgment for women and leads to a less favourable assessment. This is also a disadvantage for work organizations.

In literature, a number of features based on binary opposition were collected in connection with gender. Female qualities are “affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken. In contrast, men are associated with being especially aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic”. The latter traits “are also associated in most people’s minds with effective leadership. As a result, women leaders find themselves in a double bind”. If they have the characteristics of women, they are not good leaders and can be criticized because they are not strong enough. But if they are good managers, with masculine features, they seem to be disagreeable.<sup>20</sup>

*“Representations of non-traditional ‘exceptions’ (feminists, careerist women) reflect negative attitudes (competent, but not lovable), making adaptation to the traditional role expectations ‘desirable’” (Kovács –Szabó 2017 :44).*

*“Identity is also part of the gender-conscious language use, as the research has shown that it is disagreeable when a woman is ‘too’ confident and manly in task-oriented situations because it violates the expectations towards women” (Carli–Eagly 1999). “The environment prefers the more insecure women who may even seek help in something” (Nagy, 2017, p. 62).*

The hierarchy created by the evolving tendency of the job and preserved by the orderly closeness of the male world is present among the scientists well. The disadvantage of women researchers is mainly due to gender stereotypes and the division of male-female roles (Schadt, 2011, p. 66). This was the result of the research carried out by two sociologists, Mária Schadt and Zsuzsanna Pótó between January 2007 and November 30, 2009. Gender inequalities were measured in research and development by examining the factors at institutional (workplace, family) level, based on which the factors preventing career prospects of women working in scientific research are reproduced. In their questionnaire study, a representative sample was taken that provided a comprehensive picture of the work and career opportunities of men and women working in the scientific field. A total of 1271 questionnaires were analysed (447 men (34.2%) and 824 women (64.8%) were in the sample) and sought answers to the differences between the two sexes in scientific advancement chances and circumstances, and in different disciplines (Schadt, 2011).

Their results have shown, among other things, that the requirements of scientific research could not be fulfilled by women as a result of reconciling private life tasks, namely family and career, because they have been much more burdened than men. However, women were in a disadvantaged position even if the same conditions existed, for instance because men’s anticipated confidence in their own sex meant additional benefits to men (see old men’s club, Matthew effect). Less opportunities for women resulted in less professional achievements, fewer publications, and thus a lag in the hierarchy of scientific life (Schadt 2011: 66). Based on the answers to the open questions, it was also highlighted that of the men and women with the same qualifications and scientific degree, men got a better position and most of them not for their performance, but the

<sup>19</sup> “Another way of fending off the stereotype is to try to assume the characteristics of a more positively regarded social group (Padilla, 2008). Assimilation refers to the process of trying to attain a more desired social identity by distancing oneself from members of one’s negatively stereotyped group and adopting the characteristics of members of a more highly regarded identity group” (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Thomas, 1993 quoted by Block-Koch-Liberman-Merriweather- Roberson 2011: 577).

<sup>20</sup> Michelle K. Ryan S. Alexander Haslam, - Mette D. Hersby (2011).



gender was the decisive factor. According to researchers' supposition, in the field of scholarly work, most women have chosen to renounce competition as a solution to conflicts (Schadt, 2011, p. 66).

With all this, it became apparent that "the positive changes in women's education and higher education are usually only changes on the plane of consciousness, while inequalities persist among scientists" (Schadt, 2011, p. 66).

## 7. Conclusion

Behind the discrimination are the widespread conscious and unconscious mental innervations of women, men and leaders. Numerous studies have confirmed that people associate women and men with different attributes, which favour men's career in the labour market. For this reason, the biggest obstacles in women's career are the result of traditional role perceptions.

If we look at the results it is undeniable that there have been changes in all areas. On the scientific field, as Nóra Séllei writes in her study *Women Professors at the University of Debrecen*, in four years, the proportion of women with leading positions nearly doubled (17%), but "17% is still only one-third of 50%, and half of those with PhD degrees are women. And similarly disproportionate data will be encountered even if we are not examining the leadership position but the hierarchy of university instructors" (Séllei, 2015, p. 262).

Commonly recommended solutions include (Carly & Eagly, 2007), for example, enforcing state anti-discrimination legislation in organizations. But we should not forget that remedy is really impossible because it is difficult to detect or demonstrate gender inequality if it is a matter of normative injustice in organizational structure and culture. According to Carli and Eagly, therefore, the most effective solution would be for individual organizations to recognize the problem themselves and to consciously, even locally prevent or remedy them (Carli & Eagly 2007).

But, as Beáta Nagy put it, the greatest problem everywhere, whether it is a state or organizational intervention, is that "those who have the means and power to change the status quo do not recognise the presence of stereotype and inequality because they do not even see them" (Nagy, 2017, p. 63).

The aim of this study was to raise awareness of the problem, its complexity and the need to keep things in mind, as there is a triple burden on "graduate and leading women: the job, work at home and the struggle with the sexist working environment" (Acker, 2009; quoted by Nagy, 2017, p. 64).

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