

# Woman

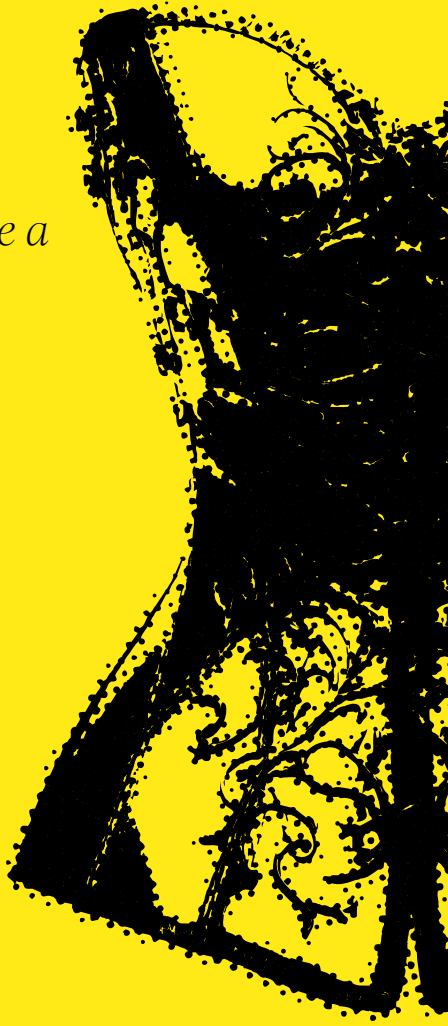
*but is the world ready for us?*

*because you are a  
woman*

*women empower women*

*fighting for our rights*

*women support women*





*because you are  
a woman*

*dedicates to all the women trou-  
bling between career and life*

*keep slaying girl bosses*

*Fame*  
FUCKING SUCKS  
AN INTERVIEW  
W/ BILLIE EILISH  
*Family*  
MATTERS MOST



*Where have the*  
*Women Gone?*  
EXPLORING INDUSTRY EQUALITY

*We need*  
*More Women*  
SAYS ONLY FEMALE WINNER OF MILLENNIUM TECHNOLOGY PRIZE



*Executive Women*  
AND THE MYTH OF HAVING IT ALL

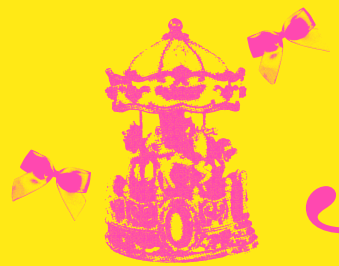


WHEN PEOPLE ASSUME YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE  
*Because you are a*  
*Woman*

# Fame

FUCKING SUCKS

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILLIE EILISH



# Family

MATTERS MOST

Get to know TIDAL Rising Artist of March 2018, Billie Eilish, in this Q&A.

March 23, 2018 by  
Paley Martin



"Fame fucking sucks," says alt-pop singer-songwriter Billie Eilish. "I hate it. But it's great, though."

Eilish, this week's TIDAL Rising Artist of the Week, is a few weeks into her first solo tour when we talk on the phone. She's hit Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the point where the reality of her worldwide fame is starting to sink in. "It's really weird. It's like nothing I would ever think

it is," she says. "When this kind of thing happens, you just have to be like, 'Shit, OK. Great. Let's just go with it.'" And going with it is exactly what she's done, embracing her new lifestyle but also recognizing its natural downfalls. Connecting with fans from her native L.A. to the energetic crowds in Auckland, Eilish, at 16 years old, is, in her words "learning more and more" as she goes — one day, one city at a time.

In this interview, Billie Eilish talks about adapting to the attention since releasing last year's don't smile at me EP, her unique sense of self, meeting Tyler, the Creator and more. She also shares a playlist with TIDAL of her "jump around punch people songs," fittingly titled WE ALL DIE EVENTUALLY ILL DO WHAT I WANT TIL THEN. Listen to the playlist and read more about the unapologetic artist below.

## WE ALL DIE EVENTUALLY ILL DO WHAT I WANT TILL THEN

"these are my jump around punch people songs/ no one matters in the end im all i have so im having fun while i can THESE SOME OF THE BEST ARTISTS AT THE MOMENT TAKE A LISTEN AND REMEMBER THEY NAME". - Billie Eilish



Mix It - Bass Santana



Jack and the Beanstalk - Tyler, The Creator



So High - Doja Cat



WuWu - Thutmose



WISH YOU WELL - Amir Obe



&burn - Billie Eilish, Vince Staples



MICHUUL - DUCK-WRTH



Barbie & Ken - Jesse



GO - Tekno



Let Me Blow Ya Mind - Eve, Gwen Stefani



Roll in Peace (feat. XXXTENTACION) - Kodak Black



**How has the tour been?  
What's your favorite city  
been so far?**

Well, this is the beginning of the tour. We just did the Laneway tour, which was Singapore and all over Australia so that was pretty sick. It was my first real festival, and Laneway is like the same festival over and over and over again. Festivals are insane. I feel like I'm invincible now, but it's been cool.

**How has it been seeing your fans in these very different areas and how people are responding to your music?**

It's weird, everywhere is different. The vibes are all different. Some of the [audiences] are really energetic and jumping around, and then some of them still love it the same amount but just stand there and don't really move [or] make any noise. It's really weird to see because the more we have shows in these places, you get to know what each audience is like in all the different places.

**Where was the rowdiest crowd?**

I'd probably say Brisbon was the most fun show. I also did a show in Auckland. God, New Zealand is beautiful. The people there are crazy and so loving, and I think the audiences are almost the best there. They have been on this tour but Brisbon was incredible. Oh my God. That was so much fun. Now, we're in London, and we're about to do the whole UK and Europe

run and go home for a little then we have the whole US run. I'm just living.

**Last year was a huge year for you, and now you're traveling around the world with almost all of your shows sold out. Is it easy to adapt to this sudden fame and popularity?**

It's really weird. It's like nothing I would ever think it is, especially touring. You will never know what touring is like until you're touring. You just can't. It's the same with being in the public eye in any way. That's just how it is. I don't know if there really is any way to process it or feel about it. When this kind of thing happens, you just have to be like, "Shit, OK. Great. Let's just go with it." I don't even know. It's a hard thing, it's weird.

**Do you feel a certain amount of pressure?**

I don't know if it's pressure. I think I'm learning more and more. It's obvious you can't please everyone, like never in a million years will you be able to make everyone happy. That's just how it is, and it's such a hard thing to wrap your mind around, the fact that the bigger you get in any way, the more people are going to disagree with you and what you do. I have the tiniest amount of fame compared to really big names like Justin Bieber, the Kardashians or anything like that, but the amount of being under a spotlight that I already have is already so insane. Hate is a whole other thing but

**Perfect murder, take your aim I don't belong to anyone But everybody knows my name By the way, you've been uninvited 'Cause all you say, are all the same things I did Copycat tryna cop my manner Watch your back when you can't watch mine Copycat tryna cop my glamor Why so sad, bunny? Can't have mine**

COPYCAT  
Billie Eilish

*it destroys you, dude. Fame fucking sucks. I hate it. But it's great, though. I don't mean that to sound ungrateful. It's a really hard thing and hurts, but who cares?*

**You seem very outspoken and to know what you're about from your style to your lyrics, your aesthetic. Have you always been that way?**

Pretty much, yeah. The thing is I've always done what I wanted to do, no matter what it was or who was telling me what to do. If you just do what everyone else does all the time just to please other people, it's like what if everyone in the world dies right now? Then you'd be left with the thing you didn't want in the first place that you didn't want to work for but you did. It's stupid. It's like if you don't want it, don't get it. I've always known what I wanted — always.

**It seems like you have a family that's very supportive of that. You guys seem like a tightly knit crew, so I'm sure that definitely helps.**

It's definitely made me who I am, having the supportive ground that I have.

**Are any of them on tour with you?**

My mom's on tour with me. My brother is, my dad is coming for the US part. My brother writes everything with me, and he produces all my stuff and plays with me live.

**Is it weird talking to your friends back home, with you living this totally contrasting lifestyle?**

It's really weird. Nobody can really understand it. I

understand that they can't understand it, it's just a pretty hard thing. I've definitely lost a lot of people. I would have lost them anyway no matter if I had what happened to me happen or not because that's how lives work but it's a really different thing. When I hang out with people I haven't seen in a while, I say the things that are going on in my life and people think I'm bragging. I'm not bragging, I'm just telling you about my life. The things that happened to me are just part of my life and my experiences, and you ask me what I've been doing lately, so I'm telling you and I'm just being honest and telling you what they are — but it's really different from what people are doing. I think the main thing to think about is for a while, people would get mad at me for not hanging out with them or not responding or being available but they don't understand that what I'm doing is a job. It's not some fun thing. It's my job, and I actually have to do it. When I'm working, I'm working. Just because I'm 16 and it's a different kind of job than working in an office from 9 to 5, it's still work and it's still my job. I still have to work hard.

**It seems like you have a cool crop of artists surrounding you in L.A. Who else do you have your eyes on that you'd love to work with?**

I have a lot of new artists that I listen to all the time. I really like finding new music. I found this guy, Bass Santana, that's incredible. I really love Moses Sumney. He's unbelievable.

Brockhampton is incredible. Earl Sweatshirt. Tyler, the Creator. There's really a lot. I could name a thousand people for you.

**You've mentioned Tyler in a lot of your interviews. Have you met? What's your favorite Tyler album?**

Yeah, we met. It was really crazy and really random. I just met him because I was with my friend Leo, and Tyler was at the Golf Wang shop in L.A. that was pretty new. He was like, 'Hey guys, come through,' so we did. We just went and hung out with him in the back room of the shop and then we went outside. It was really sick and really random and so normal, which is crazy because he's been such a big influence, and I know he probably doesn't care at all but I care. He's been such a part of my life, and he's a genius.

The first album I heard of his, which really got me into his music, was Goblin, and especially the song 'Goblin' blew my mind a little bit because it's so weird and so different, but I think Goblin and Wolf are so good to me. There are so many amazing songs on those albums, like, Jesus Christ.

**On a different note, when did you start coming into your own as far as your style goes? Do you have a favorite piece?**

I don't know. I'm always changing. I think shoes are the best part for me. I love sports shoes and everything. I

**Burning cities  
and napalm  
skies Fifteen  
flares inside  
those ocean  
eyes Your  
ocean eyes  
No fair You  
really know  
how to make  
me cry  
When you  
gimme those  
ocean eyes  
I'm scared I've  
never fallen  
from quite this  
high  
Fallin' into  
your ocean  
eyes Those  
ocean eyes**

think my favorite shoes would be my black Air Jordan 15s because they're so beautiful. I'm so in love with those shoes so that's probably my favorite. With style, I've never really cared. When I was little, it wasn't like I grew up caring a ton about fashion or beauty. I've never really cared about that stuff. It was more like clothes as a whole, not as fashion and that kind of thing. Clothing and fashion has always been my safety blanket. As Rihanna said as she was winning an award, she said that fashion is her defense mechanism, and I really resonated with that. That hit me, so clothing and visual art is the most important for me and always has been.

**When you're on tour, do you find that your fans are dressing like you?**

Yo, what's actually crazy is at all of my shows, like when I'm at a festival, if I see people wearing really sick outfits, they always are there to see me. I don't mean that to sound cocky or anything. I just think it's so sick because at all of my shows, my fans all look so sick and they dress so well. They always look really cool.

**Do you feel like you know what's coming next, or are you just creating and touring and whatever happens, happens?**

It's really that. What's happening is happening. We're definitely working on a lot of stuff, and there's a lot of stuff coming.

# Despite progress, women still bear heavier load than men in balancing work and family

“... Mothers are more likely than fathers to say they quit their job at some point for family reasons, by 27% to 10%.

Among men and women who say that they reduced their work hours to care for a child or family member, women are twice as likely as men to say this hurt their career overall, by 35% to 17%.”

CHOOSE ONE

CAREER

FAMILY

UNAVAILABLE

## **Why Do Women's Life Choices Get Reduced to "Career or Family"?**

**All women get presented with is a simplistic binary.**

All while ignoring what we should actually be asking.

Why are women's life choices constantly presented as this either-or between having kids or a career?

There's...more to life than just having a career or children. Regardless of your gender.

All while ignoring what we should actually be asking.

**Why are women's life choices constantly presented as this either-or between having kids or a career?**

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# Where have the Women Gone?

## EXPLORING INDUSTRY EQUALITY

**If the design industry is to avoid “marching towards obsolescence” it must create and embrace real change, according to design leaders.**

By Abbey Bamford  
March 8, 2023

“The world is male-shaped and then adapted for women”, says design diversity organisation Kerning the Gap founder Nat Maher. Even the design industry, which is full of people who are problem solvers by vocation, has not been able to change this.

The Design Council’s 2022 Design Economy report revealed that the industry is disproportionately male, with only 23% of designers identifying as female. The figures have shifted by 1% since its first report in 2015.



There is an even larger disparity when it comes to designers in managerial positions, with men dominating 79% of them.

Most will already hear alarm bells ringing, but it gets worse. At college level in the UK, female students have consistently achieved higher grades than their male counterparts since 2010 and a huge 63% of design education students at university level are female, according to Kerning the Gap’s figures.

It begs the question: “Where have all the women gone?”, says Maher.

### “Inhospitable and incompatible”

Maher identifies the early 30s as the real “crisis point” when women start to disappear from the industry. For the last decade, the average child-bearing age in the UK has sat at around age 30, according to Statista.

While this offers up some explanation, Maher questions why so many of them do not re-enter the industry after having children. Her answer is that design agency environments are “fundamentally inhospitable and incompatible with family life”.

“Working 70 hours a week, pitching at the weekend, pulling all-nighters. It’s a lot of pressure”, says Maher.

So, how can the industry adapt? “By a doing a hundred different things consist-

ently”, according to Maher, though she admits this is harder for smaller businesses with less cash in the bank and no HR department.

Data based on the Design Business Association’s Members Annual Survey 2022. Pentagram partner Marina Willer is one of the few who made it to a managerial designer position. Willer puts much of her unobstructed success down to her deciding to have children slightly later in life, when she was already a creative director at Wolff Olins.

Despite taking a year off after an “extreme pregnancy” with twin boys, Willer “felt confident” coming back to work because of her professional experience, something that she realises is “much harder for junior designers”. She was also able to afford childcare due to her success.

Willer, who studied at the Royal College of Art in London for her Masters, says that many of her talented classmates “don’t seem so visible anymore” in the industry. She suspects the reason is having to prioritise family over their careers.

In a similar vein, she has noticed that “a lot of women who have taken leading positions in the industry have decided not to have children, or were not able to because of the pressure of work”. In her view, the industry needs to find ways for people to have both.

# Where have the Women Gone?

EXPLORING INDUSTRY EQUALITY

## “Designers can’t just sit and wait”

One attempted solution was shared parental leave, which came into play six years ago, allowing mothers to share a portion of maternity leave and pay with their partners. Only 2% of men took up the opportunity, according to the Guardian. It also revealed that less than a third of fathers choose to take statutory two-week paid paternity leave.

Maier believes unequal pay is to blame because, in a heteronormative relationship, men generally earn around “20% more than women, even if they have equal roles”. For many couples, it makes sense for higher earner to go back to work.

Both Maier and Willer praise Scandinavia’s solution, which includes free nurseries and creche support, expressing that this should be more prevalent on the UK government’s agenda. But Scandinavia has something that the UK does not: a largely female government.

The UK government appeared negligent to women’s issues earlier this year, when it rejected a proposal for a “menopause leave”. Since menopause coincides with a “real maturing point in your career”, Maier says this could have been a “tidemark policy” and helped to combat the fallout of women across the design industry.

In the absence of govern-

ment-imposed legislation, Willer says that that “designers can’t just sit and wait” for the government to act. She suggests industry leaders should accept that some people may need flexible hours when it comes to childcare and menopause.

“One thing about design is that there’s a pressure to be creative and to deliver, which is really quite specific,” says Willer, adding that “it can be painful if you’re not feeling on top of your game”.

## “Lead by example”

Saying that “a brilliant designer should be able to put themselves in the shoes of anybody” does not take unconscious bias into account, says Maier. She adds that believing you can “think intuitively for all demographics” is arrogant.

Household co-founder and chief executive officer Julie Oxberry considers how having a diverse board from the studio’s conception has encouraged more women to rise through the ranks.

Oxberry came to design as her second career at age 30. She had a social sciences degree from Warwick University, had travelled across the US for eight years, eventually returning to the UK to study design at the London College of Professional Studies.

“Because I was older and had a bit of world experience, I was perhaps less worried about speaking up”, says Ox-



berry, though she did notice male dominance more in larger design businesses.

Household was set up in Shoreditch by five female founders and one male in 2004. Oxberry says: “It was a fantastic feeling that we made that happen and that the majority of our board and directors are still female.”

She feels there are very few female role models across the industry “particularly at senior levels”, adding that women already in these positions should “lead by example and set the bar”.

Household tries to be as hospitable as possible, while giving a platform to designers on every level, “from junior to director”, she explains. “It is important that women feel like they can speak up and don’t need to be polite.”

Willer agrees that women are often taught “not to be so comfortable, loud, confident, or visible” and that junior designers must be able to “see examples they can relate to” to believe they can climb the industry ladder.

Having more women in senior positions has the potential to create an empathy-driven ripple effect on issues like lack of support during motherhood and menopause. Household embraces hybrid working and flexi-hours and Oxberry says its diverse board helps the studio to practice a more “democratic” hiring process.

## “You can’t teach someone how to be a woman”

Male-dominated senior roles ultimately mean more men doing the hiring. “We look for people who are like us and demonstrate the qualities we recognise in ourselves and so the cycle perpetuates,” says Maier.

She explains how there is a “short-sighted willingness” industry-wide, as people make small efforts to hire women for senior roles but are immediately discouraged when there are not any ready-made female creative directors.

Employers should be looking to “hire potential” says Maier, because “it is possible to train a very talented senior designer to be a design director in the space of six months”.

“You can teach leadership skills but you can’t teach someone how to be a woman”, she adds.

Studio Lotalica founder and creative director Cecilia Righini bypassed the vicious cycle by taking matters into their own hands and starting their own studio in 2020. Righini believes that, if there is no space for women and queers in the industry, designers must create some. Studio Lotalica aims to do just that by committing to hiring feminists and queers and working with ethical clients.

# We need More Women

SAYS ONLY FEMALE WINNER OF MILLENNIUM TECHNOLOGY PRIZE

**Women form just 16% of the nominees for next year's award, but Nobel laureate Prof Frances Arnold says gender balance will come through girls working in science from a young age.**

As a Nobel laureate, Prof Frances Arnold is not short of accolades. Yet being the only woman to so far win the Millennium Technology Prize – the Nobel equivalent for engineers – is one of the least appealing.

Nominations for the €1m 2024 prize closed last week, and the organisers have revealed that women formed just 16.3% of nominees, the highest of any year since the biennial award's launch in 2004, apart from the 28.1% put forward in 2022.

"We'd love to see more diversity in the winners of these prizes because we know that

diverse people contribute to technology,"

Arnold, an American chemical engineer, told the Observer. The award organiser, Technology Academy Finland (TAF), has pushed the scientific and engineering community to think about women when they consider innovations towards creating a better life.

Tim Berners-Lee was the inaugural winner in 2004 for inventing the world wide web, while others have been recognised for DNA fingerprinting, fibre optic networks and stem cell research. But Arnold said it would take time for more women to join her.

"It's important to remember that these prizes are often recognising work that was started 20, maybe even 30 years ago, when women were not as numerous in the

technology community as they are today," she said. "So my prediction is that there will be more nominations for women because marvellous women are joining the technology community.

"Also, it's possible women are not recognised as much because they work in teams. And these kinds of prize often try to pinpoint a contribution of one or a few – very few – individuals."

"Half of our undergraduates are women. So the pipeline is there. Whether they stay to compete in academic research is another question."

Women often choose to "look more widely" than men and often go into leadership positions in industry, Arnold said, where "maybe their potential for making these big discoveries is not as great".

# FEMINISM ISN'T ABOUT MAKING WOMEN STRONGER. WOMEN ARE ALREADY STRONG, IT IS ABOUT CHANGING THE WORLD PERCEIVES THAT STRENGTH.

# Executive Women

## AND THE MYTH OF HAVING IT ALL

by Sylvia Ann Hewlett

There is a secret out there—a painful, well-kept secret: At midlife, between a third and a half of all successful career women in the United States do not have children. In fact, 33% of such women (business executives, doctors, lawyers, academics, and the like) in the 41-to-55 age bracket are childless—and that figure rises to 42% in corporate America. These women have not chosen to remain childless. The vast majority, in fact, yearn for children. Indeed, some have gone to extraordinary lengths to bring a baby into their lives. They subject themselves to complex medical procedures, shell out tens of thousands of dollars, and derail their careers—mostly to no avail, because these efforts come too late. In the words of one senior manager, the typical high-achieving woman childless at midlife has not made a choice but a “creeping nonchoice.”

Why has the age-old business of having babies become so difficult for today's high-achieving women? In January 2001, in partnership with the market research company Harris Interactive and the National Parenting Association, I conducted a nationwide survey designed to explore the professional

and private lives of highly educated, high-earning women. The survey results are featured in my new book, *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*.

In this survey, I target the top 10% of women—measured in terms of earning power—and focus on two age groups: an older generation, ages 41 to 55, and their younger peers, ages 28 to 40, as defined for survey purposes. I distinguish between high achievers (those who are earning more than \$55,000 in the younger group, \$65,000 in the older one) and ultra-achievers (those who are earning more than \$100,000). I include a sample of high-potential women—highly qualified women who have left their careers, mainly for family reasons. In addition, I include a small sample of men.

### The Continuing Inequity

When it comes to career and fatherhood, high-achieving men don't have to deal with difficult trade-offs: 79% of the men I surveyed report wanting children—and 75% have them. The research shows that, generally speaking, the more successful the man, the more likely he will find a



spouse and become a father. The opposite holds true for women, and the disparity is particularly striking among corporate ultra-achievers. In fact, 49% of these women are childless. But a mere 19% of their male colleagues are. These figures underscore the depth and scope of the persisting, painful inequities between the sexes. Women face all the challenges that men do in working long hours and withstanding the up-or-out pressures of high-altitude careers. But they also face challenges all their own.

### The Time Crunch

Now add to that scarcity of marriage candidates a scarcity of time to spend nurturing those relationships. My survey results show that women are dealing with long and lengthening workweeks. Twenty-nine percent of high achievers and 34% of ultra-achievers work more than 50 hours a week, and a significant proportion of these women are on the job ten to 20 more hours a week than they were five years ago. Among ultra-achievers, a quarter are away on business at least five nights every three months. According to research by sociologists Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson, the percentage of women working at least 50 hours a week is now higher in the United States than in any other country.

Think of what a 55-hour week means in terms of work-life balance. If you assume an hour lunch and a 45-minute round-trip commute (the national average), the workday stretches to almost 13 hours. Even without “extras” (out-of-town trips, client dinners,

work functions), this kind of schedule makes it extremely difficult for any professional to maintain a relationship. Take Sue Palmer, 49, managing director of Grant Thornton, the London-based global accounting firm, and the only woman on its management committee. “Ten years ago,” she said, “an assistant of mine told me at the end of a particularly grueling 70-hour week, ‘You know, Sue, you couldn't have a torrid love affair if you wanted to.’ And I shot back, ‘I couldn't have a tepid love affair if I wanted to.’”

Of course, long hours aren't unique to women. They're a fact of life in corporate America, where management is under intense pressure to use its professional workforce for as many hours a week as possible. The reasons for this go back to 1938 when Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which institutionalized the 40-hour work-week and required employers to pay overtime for additional hours worked. One provision, however, exempted managers and professionals and still does. For those workers, extra hours carry no marginal costs to employers. The temptation for companies to take advantage of that provision might not have been so problematic back in 1938 when only 15% of employees were exempt, and most of them were men with stay-at-home spouses. But it produces significant overload today when close to 30% of employees are in the exempt category, many of them women who rarely have the luxury of a spouse at home tending to domestic responsibilities.



### An Unforgiving Decade

Women pay an even greater price for those long hours because the early years of career building overlap—almost perfectly—the prime years of childbearing. It's very hard to throttle back during that stage of a career and expect to catch up later. As policy analyst Nancy Rankin points out, the career highway has all kinds of off-ramps but few on-ramps.

In fact, the persistent wage gap between men and women is due mainly to the penalties women incur when they interrupt their careers to have children. In a recent study, economists Susan Harkness and Jane Waldfogel compared that wage gap across seven industrialized countries and found it was particularly wide in the United States. For example, in France, women earn 81% of the male wage, in Sweden 84%, and in Australia 88%, while in the United States, women continue to earn a mere 78% of the male wage. These days, only a small portion of this wage gap can be attributed to discrimination (getting paid less for doing the same job or being denied access to jobs, education, or capital based on sex). According to recent studies, an increasingly large part of the wage gap can now be explained by childbearing and child rearing, which interrupt women's—but not men's—careers, permanently depressing their earning power. If the gap between what men and women earn in this country is wider than

elsewhere, it isn't because this country has done an inferior job combating discrimination. It is because it has failed to develop policies—in the workplace and in society as a whole—that support working mothers.

### The Second Shift

The problem with the notion that American women should be able to successfully clone the male competitive model is that husbands have not picked up a significant share of women's traditional responsibilities on the home front. Even high-achieving women who are married continue to carry the lion's share of domestic responsibilities. (See the exhibit "Primary Child Care and Household Responsibilities.") Only 9% of their husbands assume primary responsibility for meal preparation, 10% for the laundry, and 5% for cleaning the house. When it comes to children, husbands don't do much better. Only 9% of them take time off from work when a child is sick, 9% take the lead in helping children with homework, and 3% organize activities such as play dates and summer camp.

Yes, these percentages have grown over the years—but not much. At the end of the day, the division of labor at home boils down to one startling fact: 43% of the older, high-achieving women and 37% of the younger, high-achieving women feel that their husbands actually create more household work for them than they contribute. (Thirty-nine percent of

ultra-achieving women also feel this way, despite the fact that half of them are married to men who earn less than they do.)

This is the harsh reality behind the myth of having it all. Even in organizations whose policies support women, prevailing attitudes and unrelenting job pressures undermine them. Women's lives have expanded. But the grudging attitudes of most corporate cultures weigh down and constrain what individual women feel is possible.

# THE WORLD IS M-ALE-SHAPED AND THEN ADAPTED FOR WOMEN



# WHEN PEOPLE ASSUME YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE

# Because you are a Woman

BY AMY DIEHL AND LEANNE M. DZUBINSKI

**Role incredulity is a form of gender bias where women are mistakenly assumed to be in a support or stereotypically female role — an administrative assistant, nurse, wife, or girlfriend, for instance — rather than a leadership or stereotypically male role, such as CEO, professor, lawyer, doctor, or engineer. While this slight or mistake might seem innocuous, it can have real ramifications for women. Women must expend extra energy and time to assert and prove their role. Their words may lack the credibility and authority inherent in their position. And when women are not seen as a leader, they may be less likely to be hired into male-dominated roles or to be considered for promotions.**

When a digital marketer we'll call Alexandra attended meetings alone, clients often asked, "Are we waiting for him to arrive?" "Him" was an imaginary person, Alexandra's supposed male boss. The clients assumed that Alexandra was in a support role instead of the key decision maker.

For a while Alexandra downplayed the mistake for fear of offending the clients, but soon realized that their condescending view limited discussions. As she explained, "Walking into a negotiation where the other person is basically telling you up-front they deem you less than, even before you open your mouth, was and is demoralizing."

Alexandra's experience isn't unique. Many women have faced similar assumptions about their positions in their organization. We propose a new term for this behavior: role incredulity.

Role incredulity is a form of gender bias where women are mistakenly assumed to be in a support or stereotypically female role — secretary, administrative assistant, court reporter, nurse, wife, girlfriend — rather than a leadership or stereotypically male role, such as CEO, professor, lawyer, doctor, or engineer. In these instances, women must expend extra energy and time to assert and sometimes prove their role. Their words may lack the credibility and authority inherent in their position. Role incredulity surfaced as a common theme in our research dataset of women's stories from interviews, open-ended survey responses, social media posts, and public articles.

Many women on Twitter have expressed frustration with role incredulity. Some women were flat out told they don't look like someone in a male-dominated role ("you don't look like an engineer") or were received incredulously. For instance, one woman was introduced to a colleague's male friend, and the friend expressed surprise that she was a reporter, explaining that he assumed the women were in the newsroom "to type up the stories for the men." Role incredulity can even be a safety issue; a geomicrobiologist was injured in her own lab when a young male staff member wouldn't listen to her.

Women of color frequently find themselves subjected to role incredulity. On Twitter, several medical doctors described being mistaken

as the wife or girlfriend of a physician, as Dr. Uché Blackstock recently noted: "For the umpteenth time, I was asked again today by a parking garage attendant (\*\*looking at my MD license plate for hospital parking). 'Are you the doctor or is your husband?'" Similarly at a fellowship welcome picnic, Dr. Jennifer Huang was mistakenly assumed to be another fellow's girlfriend or wife, and Dr. Nancy Yen Shipley was assumed to be the wife of a medical doctor at a fellowship interview. Dr. Yen Shipley commented, "I mean, I'm a wife. Of someone else. Who is not at the fellowship mixer."

Role incredulity can even happen to women working in positions that aren't male-dominated. Author Kalani Pickhart works in a university staff role. She recently shared that when faculty find out that she is publishing a novel, "You can see their brain short-circuit like, 'Wait, you're not supposed to be capable of anything but making my copies.'" In another example, a cosmetologist has had clients request a male employee do their makeup because "those types are just so much better"

Role incredulity is harmful for both individuals and organizations. Not only must women manage their emotions while being doubted repeatedly and expend extra time and energy to assert their roles, but it can also hamper their career paths. In situations where evaluations may be based on timely responses, such as in customer



service or technical support, a woman's ratings may be lower simply because she must spend time defending her expertise before she can attend to the customer's problem. When women are not seen as a leader, engineer, or physician in the same way than men are, they may be less likely to be hired into male-dominated roles or to be considered for promotions. Within organizations, role incredulity serves to maintain gender inequity and thwarts the benefits of an inclusive workforce. When only a certain profile or type of employee (typically, white male) is seen as capable of expressing authority or exercising leadership, the organization misses out on the wisdom and perspectives of underrepresented groups — perspectives that have been shown to increase organizational performance.

But organizational leaders, workplace allies, and women themselves can take steps to prevent and correct role incredulity. Here are a few we've seen in our own work that can help. When a digital marketer we'll call Alexandra attended meetings alone, clients often asked, "Are we waiting for him to arrive?" "Him" was an imaginary person, Alexandra's supposed male boss. The clients assumed that Alexandra was in a support role instead of the key decision maker.

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**This story begins long before now,  
where women have big dreams.  
Dreams of something greater than  
what smuggles self-esteem.**

**First it must be said, that each woman  
to her own. but surely with this senti-  
ment, I am not alone.**

**Growin gup we're told that we can  
have it all. We can choose our career  
of heart's content, and feel as tall as  
tall.**

**When a woman becomes a mum,  
there's no doubt the joy it brings. But  
with it there are duties that will inher-  
ently clip our wings.**

**Our choices are diminished, our earn-  
ings are fragmented.  
Because we are the women and so  
what's ours becomes lamented.**

*won't you celebrate with me*

*won't you celebrate with me  
what i have shaped into  
a kind of life? i had no model.  
born in babylon  
both nonwhite and woman  
what did i see to be except myself?  
i made it up  
here on this bridge between  
starshine and clay,  
my one hand holding tight  
my other hand; come celebrate  
with me that everyday  
something has tried to kill me  
and has failed.*

*Lucille Clifton*



*to all the women  
in the world*

*when people assume you are not in  
charge just...*

*Because  
You are a*