

Gender system and organizations

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Abstract: This article aims to elaborate on the relations between gender, power and organizations. Power is a key factor for understanding gender relations, and both power and gender are fundamental to study organizations. An analysis that requires a solid basis for challenging traditional research frameworks that underlie the interpretations of the organizational practices. Practices which, by concealing their gendered nature, act to preserve and reproduce the masculine supremacy.

Keywords: Organization, gender inequalities, power, leadership.

Resumen: Este artículo tiene por objetivo explicar que el poder es un elemento clave para comprender las relaciones de género, y ambos, poder y género, son fundamentales para estudiar las organizaciones. Análisis que requiere de una base sólida para desafiar los marcos de estudio tradicionales que subyacen en las interpretaciones de las prácticas organizacionales. Prácticas que, al ocultar su naturaleza generizada, actúan para preservar y reproducir el dominio de lo masculino.

Palabras clave: Organización, género, desigualdades, poder, liderazgo.

1. Introduction

To understand the functioning of gender in organizations, we start with a set of studies (Acker, 1990, 1992, 2006, Connell, 1987, Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2008, Krook and Mackay, 2011) that start from the idea that organizations continue being a space dominated by men. Organizations that put into play “representations and practices about a certain hegemonic conception of masculinity”, since the “ways of becoming man are heterogeneous and constitute social and historical phenomena” (Palermo, 2016: 103). This is why the conception that there is a “masculinity without men” is key. A conception that questions the prejudice that “maintains masculinity as an exclusive privilege of men”. A prejudice that is maintained “due to a protectionist and conservative attitude of men in general towards masculinity” (Halberstam, 2008: 19 and 37). An attribute of individuals who are not abstract, asexual, universal beings, but “people who are part of a society and a culture in which gender is transversal and therefore permeates any aspect of life” (Batista, 2015: 4).

The article aims to explain that gender is not only an attribute of individuals, but, as a political fact, it also appears in all areas of social life, including organizations, a masculinized social phenomenon that has to do with the historical and unequal construction, on a masculinized model, of the productive and reproductive sphere (Merino, 2016). Construction of processes and relationships that show a gendered distribution of work and power (Agirre, 2015). Distribution that explains that men and women “live linked to gender”, as a social and historical order through which women and men “engage in a gender position” (Palermo, 2016: 102), through practices, experiences and representations about the masculine and the feminine. The questioning of this distribution occurs “in parallel to the questioning of the doctrine of the separate spheres that had characterized the analysis of work-employment” (Sánchez, 2016 :387).

The article is structured as follows. In the first place, we propose, in the two following sections, the analysis of power in the gender system. Secondly, in the third section, we developed the four existing approaches on gender equity and, later, we detailed the social practices that generate gender inequalities in organizations. Fourth, the role of gender in organizational leadership is exposed, and finally the conclusion is made. The methodology that has been used has been the analysis and interpretation of texts on gender, power and organizations. The selection of the texts has taken into account, on the one hand, their relevance in the analyses on gendered organizations and, on the other hand, their publication in the journals with the greatest impact.

2. The gender system

To analyze the situation of women in organizations, we must start from the fact that, throughout history, most human societies have been organized in patriarchal structures, so that authority, leadership and power they were exercised by men. This explains that gender has been and is present in each and every social sphere, “and it is not something that has to do with women or men, as human beings of a certain sex, but with relationships (of power, economic, personal ...), with ideas, with values, with norms, etc., that define in a concrete social and historical context the masculine and the feminine and, consequently, mark the relations between men and women (not separately) and establish, among other things, the ‘appropriate’ and ‘adequate’ roles for each other in different areas, and this highlights a relevant aspect of gender stereotypes that is precisely what gives them their strength: they not only describe , but also prescribe” (Batista, 2015: 4-5) certain gender roles, meanings and experiences for men and women. What shows the power of patriarchy and patriarchal relations (Lerner, 1990; Smith, 1996; Wittig, 2005; Walby, 2009).

Patriarchal societies have been characterized by the sexual division of labor, so that, in the case of industrial societies, this division constitutes the explanatory mechanism in the relationship between class and gender, reinforcing each other (Benería and Roldan, 1992; Alcáñiz, 2015). Under this mechanism, the men went out (and leave) out of the home to earn a salary while the women were engaged (and engaged) in domestic tasks and caring for children and the sick, which has meant that gender studies speak of the gender system to refer “to the analytical-conceptual set formed by the roles, stereotypes and gender stratification, which act as interrelated elements”. These studies emphasize that the work space (productive and reproductive) “is not only the main structure of class relations, but also a crucial area to analyze gender relations in modern societies”. In fact, gender and class, or class and gender, constitute “an indispensable tandem to understand the power relations of society in general and, in particular, of labor fields” (Palermo, 2016:101).

Relationships that are explained as “women (as well as men) are socialized or educated in specific ways and are subjected to different experiences and life circumstances (social, economic, political ...),” which have led to discrimination gender reason. Discrimination based on the fact that in the gender system there is “a clear relationship between the roles assigned in a social system to men and women (which crystallize in gender roles) and the appearance, development and assignment of stereotypes and traits of In turn, stereotypes, strongly rooted and transmitted (and reinforced) thanks to the power of socialization, influence,

among other things, occupations, positions, which are considered 'appropriate' for men and women, conditioning its objectives, alternatives and decisions" (Batista, 2015:4-6).

Roles and stereotypes that do not challenge the claim that anatomy is destiny, that "gender is something original, natural and that men and women are two only options" (Halberstam, 2008: 42). Therefore, it is not recognized that there are bodies with genders that exceed men and women (Calhoun, 1995, Hale, 1996, Wittig, 2005). Therefore, Palermo (2016: 117) argues that "the construction of gender is the least creative of all, not only because it categorically simplifies sexuality but because it limits it to two opposing universes as the only legitimate possibility - men and women - and because it configures schematic and monolithic social roles, a gender-sex matrix tied to the heterosexual model is consolidated from a universal thought. This monolithic configuration, in which gender, power and subordination are mixed, leaves marks in society in general. and given the characteristics of the work process, there is a dichotomy between the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction: the first, with absolute preeminence of the masculine, while the second is constituted in a sphere of feminine domination".

The relationship between roles and stereotypes is interactive, bidirectional, as are the reciprocal influence of the organizations' practices and the internal processes of gender identity construction. Reflecting this orientation towards dynamism - "gender is something dynamic, not fixed or given" (Kenny, 2007: 97) - the approach of gender studies is not to analyze the sexual difference itself, but rather in the social and psychological processes that lead to gender differentiation, to historical subordination and to subsequent gender discrimination, stating that gender is "socially constructed", "a copy without an original" (Butler, 2001, 2002), is to say that it shapes its meaning from an institutionalized system of social practices of social domination. This does not "mean that it is subjective and arbitrary", but that the elaboration made by a certain society on its conception of gender "is intimately linked to the power structures, social relations and the forms of production and consumption of this society" (Carrasco, 2016: 360).

Rubin (1989, 1992) states that gender, like sex, is always political. Gender is not politically neutral, and is that the link of gender to sex, or better expressed to the body and reproduction, is part of a historical process, embedded in structures of patriarchal power relations, and its content changes its meaning according to the historical moment and geographical situation. In fact, once the gender category is established, it appears in multiple mutually reinforcing scenarios, such as in the distribution of resources in society, in hierarchical structures and

work practices in organizations, in the assignment of tasks in the family, in the patterns of interaction between people, the meanings and identities of people as individuals, etc. (López, 2011).

These elements of the gender system explain that to speak of gender “is inevitably to do it of power, which is constitutive of gender and forms an essential part in the generic construction in any society”. In any case, gender stereotypes “have been (and are) used as justifying or legitimizing the political dominance of men, the occupation of certain positions, etc.”. Therefore, there is a clear “interrelation (and integration) between gender stereotypes and power” (Batista, 2015:7). But, of course, the “relationship between sex and gender remains somewhat controversial and contradictory, and continues to challenge attempts to establish an organic link between the sexual and other forms of behavior.” Thus, discussions about sex “in contexts that focus less on concrete identities and more on fantasy, pleasure and acts” (Halberstam, 2008:140).

As Scott indicates (2000:79), “the characteristics that mark the differences between the sexes (...) do not exist apart from, but are produced through the theories and political practices”, and that contribute to create omnipresent structures that order human activities, social practices, terms of differentiation between women and men (Bourdieu, 2000). In other words, the gender system produces the emergence of two very different types of people, men and women, and organizes values, experiences and meanings around this difference, and under a particular model of masculinity and femininity. As this process is fundamentally social, institutions and, in particular, organizations can contribute to favoring or weakening it (Acker, 1990), through what is called hegemonic masculinity that stands as a model of reference, or what is called the “glass ceiling”, that is, “the invisible top that prevents women from reaching where men are” (Gallego, 1994: 21), or “the obstacles that do not allow women’s participation on an equal footing with men” (Osborne, 2005: 165), or to continue thinking “that masculinity in girls and women is something disgusting and pathological” (Halberstam, 2008 :296).

As in the systems based on race, class, disability ..., differences in the gender system are linked to inequality, the establishment of hierarchies, differences and real, substantive distinctions. Differences and distinctions regarding access to resources, the power of friends, the time available and socialization models, “to mention some relevant but not unique factors” (Osborne, 2005: 167). Factors that have organized societies in patriarchal structures through the naturalization of the sexual division of labor, and the undervaluation of care work “that maintains the lack of attention by the intersections of gender, social class and ethnic origin

that implies the prevalence of immigrant women as caregivers” (Lombardo y León, 2014: 22). Naturalization that presents gender as dependent on a natural base (sex) or that gender is something that is voluntarily chosen, as power is voluntarily chosen. The establishment of this natural / elective dichotomy is indispensable to establish inequality, since it provides the ideological basis of unequal treatment (Lorber, 1994). Butler (2002), argues that gender cannot be reduced to this dichotomy, because its origin does not stand firm in either of these two aspects. What is involved, for Butler, is to also insert sexuality into historicity; a historicity that does not maintain sexuality as “natural data”, but as a “political data”, as a political institution, useful for men who hold patriarchal power. A historicity in which “both class, together with ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion, etc., are variables that explain inequality in society” (Alcañiz, 2015: 37).

3. Patriarchal domination

All inequality involves, Polatnick (1973), an imbalance of power, and this, together with social domination, is a fundamental element to understand the relational positions of gender, being, Saltzman (1992), necessary to take it into consideration in the analysis of any situation of individual and group inequality. The social dominance in which the predominance of men over women is called patriarchy, which emerged from a historical seizure of power by men, who appropriated the sexuality and reproduction of women and their product, the children (Reguant, 1996). Patriarchy has kept “women away from power, power is not held, exercised: it is not an essence or a substance, it is a network of relationships” (Varela, 2008: 147), of coercion or consent, “ since the communicative leadership of power does not have to occur with repression, power is not based on oppression, being a means of communication, it operates rather constructively” (Byung-Chul Han, 2016: 20). How patriarchy of consent operates in the most developed societies, where coercion leaves its central place to incitement. To this new situation, Alcañiz points out (2015: 36), Walby (1990) calls it “public patriarchy”, Webb (2010) “neopatriarcado”, de Miguel (Martínez García, 2013) ‘soft patriarchy’. This patriarchy has eliminated legal discrimination between women and men but maintains the importance of biology in the difference between women and men and adds a new foundation: freedom of choice, one of the pillars of the liberal political order”.

Therefore, in these new scenarios, Jónasdóttir (2011: 250-251) places the concept of the “power of love” at the center of his theoretical analysis of “formally egalitarian patriarchy”. His empirical starting point was “the (well-documented) fact that men’s positions of power persist even in contemporary Western

societies (including the Nordic European countries), where the combination of formal-legal equality, the high percentage of women with paid jobs and the various accommodations of the welfare state clearly benefit women, and where women are relatively independent, both socially and economically, from a particular man. My central question (still relevant) was how to explain this form historically specific to male domination or patriarchy. “ This question questions the social organization of gender inequality at a systemic or contextual level, and seeks explanations in the fact that patriarchy is a system based on a network of relationships between women and men. In this sense, women are an active part of the basic structure of patriarchy and not a mere resource on which they act and that used by men. If this is not contemplated, they are no longer considered as active agents of social construction in general, apart from being the protagonists of their own liberation (Osborne, 2009).

For Jónasdóttir (2010) the core of patriarchal exploitation in formally egalitarian societies lies in the level of existing sexual needs rather than work, “defined needs such as human love —care and ecstasy— and the products of these activities: ourselves, women and men alive. Even with the appearance of egalitarian relationships in the couple —similar in the professional and in the distribution of domestic chores— the man continues to appropriate a disproportionately large amount of care and love for women, both directly and through the children, that is, there is an unequal exchange of care and pleasure between men and women, not only in privacy but in other contexts such as work or politics” (Jónasdóttir, 1993: 51). Expressed in another way, he points out (Ibid: 157), if capital is the accumulation of alienated labor, “the” male “authority (as opposed to the” influence “of women) is the accumulation of alienated love”, and one of its results is violence against women. Men exploit women, that is, they appropriate the “ability of women to give love and care, because in our social and political (patriarchal) system, men occupy the positions of control that allow them access to this type of power acquisition, while women do not usually occupy them”.

Bonino (1996) understands by position of control (= power) as ability to do, decide, exist or self-assert (which requires social legitimacy) and as a possibility of control and domination over others (which requires having resources and means). According to the dominant gender system, men have personal, individual power, criteria, self-affirmation, ability to act and the right to be protagonists; women, on the other hand, have to conquer family power (if they can and, in any case, delegated by the androcentric culture), in the form of power of the affection, erotic and maternal care (that is, they have to achieve that they need them)). This

idea of power over others - "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something he would not do otherwise" —is the idea of hegemonic power.

However, Foucault (1980) devised another concept, which he understood as power for, and which refers to the ability that individuals and groups have to carry out projects even in a situation of subordination. For Foucault, power is not only repressive, but also productive. Power, far from being what limits us, is what creates us as we are, with our aspirations and our desires. Therefore, the term subject acquires a double meaning: that of being subject (submitted) and of being a subject (in political terms: citizen); Individual identity as subject and submission to power are one and the same thing. Hence, we should no longer imagine a centralized apparatus of repression on the part of the State, because only by the fact of wanting to be included in modern societies, we monitor ourselves, we monitor our fellow citizens, and we are monitored through the multiple cultural institutions and social to which we link voluntarily, forming a network of power much more effective than the old centralized power of the State, since it reaches the last pores of the social body, is a capillary phenomenon in modern societies (Pérez Navarro, 2008; Byung-Chul Han, 2016).

Based on this Foucauldian conceptualization, Butler (2001) denies that there is a previous subject or free of social context, that is, that there exists a subject prior to power. For Butler, power precedes the subject. The fiction of a subject that is, starting, free, is the most insidious and effective form of subordination of real subjects, so this author proposes an idea of the individual as a constituted entity, and argues that power is reproduced through of the constant repetition of performative acts. These acts are actions and / or acts of language, through which we are constantly and repeatedly constituted as subjects and, at the same time, involuntarily reproduce social norms, or in other words, the normalizing power. The origin of this tendency to the reproduction and staging of the norm "is in our need for recognition by others (from the first moment of formation of our personalities.) In the depths of our psyches, human beings adapt to categories and norms that, far from being created by ourselves, were there previously, and in this way they impose themselves on us, making us, by means of performativity, constitute ourselves as social subjects, and at the same time as subjects subordinated to the norm and not free, as modern theories claimed" (Alonso y Lois, 2014: 54-55).

Millet (1995: 32) also defines the political as the set of relationships and structured commitments according to power, by virtue of which a group of people (defined by reference to classes, races and sexes) remains under the control of another political group. Then, "sex is a social category impregnated with politics,"

and relations between the sexes, Millet concludes, are relations impregnated with domination and subordination. Therefore, to what extent can one affirm that the body is only “nature” without written cultural meanings? Have not sex and sexuality also been constructed and, in a certain way, gendered? Butler (2001: 56) responds that gender is not the cultural interpretation of sex, nor the cultural interpretation of the body, it is not constructed culturally on the body. In any of these cases we would be taking the sex and the body as the “given”, the “innate”. The body is not a “natural” product but is produced as a knot of social relations, as a knot of power relations. For this reason we can not take gender as a priori, but as something that is done, and that “gender is always a doing, although it is not done by a subject that can be considered pre-existing to action”.

This conception of Butler explains that power is central to the concept of gender, and this at least in three interrelated aspects: A) First, gender and power are structurally linked. For example, the representation of men, in general, is higher in occupations with higher wages, and with more formal, organizational, political and institutional power. B) Secondly, gender and power are culturally linked, that is, in social practices, tasks, positions and characteristics that are socially constructed according to gender. As in the juxtaposition: “men / masculinity = power” versus “women / femininity = conciliation”, which gives support to a gender system that favors men. These links highlight the unequal distribution of power between women and men and have been an integral part of the feminist gender reformulation in terms of social constructionism. C) Within this tradition, a third link between gender and power is less developed. This link redirects the attention of the distribution of power in its operationalization that is applied to the “process of formation of gender identity” (Hartsock, 1996: 46).

Process that explains that exploitation is far from involving coercion or abuse in a consistent manner and often benefits both parties (although one of these controls much better than the other the circumstances of the differential advantages that keep the exploitation system in operation) . For example, in cases of patriarchy and capitalism, exploitation can not only benefit those who are exploited but, in most cases, with their full consent (Jónasdóttir, 2011). In the words of Woods and Hammersley (1995: 13): “Since obtaining a benefit and being exploited are often merely two sides of the same coin, and that commonly people have an extreme need for the benefits in question, it is common for they are anxious to be exploited.” To understand this process Bourdieu (2000: 12 and 14) explains that history is transformed into nature, and cultural arbitrariness into natural. Thus, “a prolonged collective work of socialization of the biological and biologization of the social are combined to reverse the relationship between

causes and effects". With respect to the sexual and asymmetrical division of society, it would be a matter of "making a naturalized social construction appear (the" genders "as sexed habits) as the natural foundation of the arbitrary division that is at the beginning of both the reality as of the representation of reality".

Under the biologization of the social, the denial of individuality to women has been carried out, conceived as beings closer to nature, and the denial of individuality accompanies the process of hetero-designation that refers to the common identity construction that patriarchy, as a system of domination, it projects over all women and prevents its endowment as individualized subjects, the same as opposed to the identical ones (Mateos, 2013). By this we can refer, says Cobo (2011), that in the areas where women are constrained to live, women have "power" but for strong decisions they do not have it. These decisions are masculine and the entrance to them by some women does not change this symbolic qualification. Defined a common public space, if there is concurrence of males and females, males appropriate it. However, we must recover the idea of power as capacity or power of the actors (individual or collective) that are not powerful in the sense of power over. Power for is the ability of an agent (individual or collective) to reach an end or a series of ends. This concept of power for (basically as an agency, individual or collective) allows us to understand how members of subordinate groups retain the power to act despite their subordination. In this sense, Arendt (1997, 2005) defined power as "concerted action", since power is a phenomenon that arises from the need to act in concert for a common purpose. It is therefore a collective and relational phenomenon, which exists only to the extent that the community remains. This criterion has led to constitute a field of reflection that places in a foreground the structure and characteristics of the networks of relationships established between the different positions and institutions endowed with power" (Villena, 2017: 60).

The power as "concerted action" of Arendt, also allows to see power as a positive phenomenon, and presupposes that individuals have some freedom to act, even if they are situated in the context of different social, linguistic and discursive practices. Benhabib *et alii* (1995) insist that although the subject is (partially) externally conditioned, he does not stop trying to be autonomous, and that is what gives him meaning, both morally and politically. In this sense, it is highlighted that, in organizations, power operates on two fronts that reinforce each other: external and internal. In organizations, power operates externally through formal policies and procedures, informal work practices, norms and work patterns, discourses, rhetoric, language and other symbolic expressions. These characteristics can reinforce the traditionalism of the sexual role and, therefore,

can be points of intervention for organizational change. Rarely these forces are recognized, but they have decisive effects on gender identities in the members of the organization. For example, a mother may have a preference for part-time employment, and instead a father has it for full-time work. Of course, limitations and opportunities exogenous to the organization (for example, cultural norms on motherhood and fatherhood) also affect the choices of individuals.

Internally, power also operates through the desire of individuals to improve their social status, so that those who conform to gender ideals often achieve certain social status. The anxiety generated by being masculine or feminine enough is psychologically internalized, not only imposed from the outside. Stereotyped gender behaviors are a form of self-monitoring. Therefore, gender differences are not simply the result of external forces but also derive from internal forces produced by certain desires, and that is through internal and external pressures, the members of the social organization are defined in terms of gender, and therefore incorporate gender in their roles at work and also incorporate love as an intrinsic part of the process of building gender relations and reflecting them.

4. Theories about gender equity

In the literature on gender equity, four approaches are observed (Nicolson, 1997; Fletcher, 2003; Ely y Padavic, 2007; Czarmawska, 2011; Brunet *et alii* 2011). The first approach, and probably the most common one to promote gender equality, is based on a liberal and individualistic vision of society and organizations. It is assumed that people promote and descend category by their own merits. Gender is understood as biological sex, that is, males and females. According to this point of view, men and women are supposed to have equal access to opportunities. A basic assumption of this approach is that women have not been socialized in the world of business and companies and, therefore, do not know the rules of the game. They lack the necessary training and skills to compete in the workplace or assume leadership positions. The objective of this approach —and, therefore, its vision of gender equity— is to minimize these differences between men and women so that women can compete as equals. On the other hand, executive development programs for women represent the hallmark of this approach: leadership programs, assertive training, or negotiation skills workshops are important interventions. Many women can learn and develop important skills from those programs or workshops. This has helped some women have promoted to leadership positions. However, these programs contribute only marginally to the promotion of gender equity. Yes, they can help women in a certain way, but they only deal with the issue at the individual level, and do little to change the

systemic factors of inequality within organizations (Paglia, 2006; Rand, 2009; Blanco, 2017).

The second approach changes the framework of analysis of the elimination of the difference to the valuation of the difference. From this perspective, gender is conceptualized as the socialization differences between men and women, which are evident in the different masculine and feminine styles or forms of identities. Male and female involve different ways of life, experiences and social roles. In this framework, however, the way to achieve equity is not to eliminate or deplore these differences, but to value them. From this perspective, women are disadvantaged due to work styles, skills and attributes associated with the feminine, which are not recognized or valued in the workplace. In addition, this framework of analysis understands gender equity within a broader diversity, recognizing gender as one of the many important differences among workers. Intervention strategies include awareness and preparedness to promote tolerance and understanding of the difference (Amorós, 1985).

Other initiatives focus on demonstrating how traditionally feminine activities or styles, such as listening, collaborating, fostering, etc. they are a beneficial complement for the whole of an organization. This knowledge can lead to major changes in cultural norms and practices, recognizing the talents and contributions that women often bring to the workplace. There is no doubt that these types of interventions have created awareness and have led to more tolerance and flexibility. While this is an important step in expanding opportunities for women, it also has its limitations. By focusing on differences, the focus, in practice, can reinforce gender stereotypes. The power of the masculine image that underlies the accepted models of success, leadership and business vision is ignored. Women who promulgate a feminine style, even when their contributions are recognized and applauded, see that their efforts are almost invisible or valued in a very marginal way. The biggest barrier to achieving gender equity in this framework is that it does not question the existing hierarchical difference between men and women or the difference in valuation between masculine and feminine (Osborne, 1993).

The third approach focuses on structural barriers. Gender, in this framework, is defined in terms of differences between women and men, but redirects the attention of the differences of personal characteristics to the differential structures of opportunities that create an unequal playing field. This framework points to the segregation of occupations, jobs, forms of hiring, evaluation and promotion processes, which are biased against women and hinder their progress—the glass ceiling, as many authors point out—. The objective of this approach

is the creation of equal opportunities through the elimination of structural and procedural discriminatory barriers. Interventions in this framework tend to be legalistic and policy based. They include, for example, positive action initiatives, review of recruitment procedures, more transparent promotion policies designed to ensure fairness, sexual harassment prevention guidelines, as well as provision of work and family benefits (such as childcare, flexible schedules, etc.), the so-called conciliation policies. There is no doubt that these policies and structural interventions have contributed to improving women's opportunities. They have made possible the recruitment, retention and promotion of a greater number of women. As these numbers of women have increased, it seems that the limitations and tensions have been reduced, creating an environment in which women can compete on equal terms. These interventions and policies are a fundamental part of any gender equity initiative. However, they have also proven to be insufficient to achieve lasting benefits, because they have little direct effect on the rules and informal practices that organize labor dynamics. In the absence of a cultural change in the organization, structures and policies can not, on their own, create an equitable organization (Walby, 2009).

Apart from the three previous approaches, a fourth one stands out. Gender equity in the framework of this fourth approach focuses on the underlying systemic factors in organizations that lead to labor inequality. Gender, in this framework, is not so much a biological concept, but a social construction. Gender in this framework is not about women or discrimination, it is about the organization itself. This framework is based on the premise that organizations are inherently gendered. After being created, in large part, by and for men, organizational systems, work practices, structures and norms tend to reflect male experience, masculine values and masculine life situations. As a result, everything we have come to consider as normal and habitual at work tends to favor men, privileges that are socially and culturally attributed to men. The problem of gender equity in the fourth approach is based on deep-seated assumptions, often unquestionable, that drive behavior and work practices within the organization. These assumptions seem neutral and without consequences, but often have a differentiated impact on men and women. For example, a gender assumption that underlies the life of organizations is the informal rule that time spent at work, regardless of productivity, is a way to measure commitment and loyalty to the organization. The most valuable worker is one who is willing and willing to put the work first. This rule gives privileges to workers who have no responsibilities in the private sphere of their lives that prevent them from accepting unlimited responsibility at work. The image of the ideal worker as one who has no

responsibilities outside that interfere in the commitment to the company can give rise to work rules, formal and informal, difficult to achieve not only for women, but also for many men. What is rarely recognized, however, is that it can also have important negative consequences on business development. These biases can lead to inefficient, costly, inefficient practices (Webb, 2010).

What are the limitations of this approach? In the first place, it is a process of change and long-term learning. While this can produce significant benefits for both gender equity and business development, not all organizations are willing to be involved in this change. Second, it may be difficult to maintain the goal of gender equity, since this goal can easily be overshadowed by closer goals, such as improving organizational effectiveness. Careful and sustained attention must be given to ensure that staff and managers recognize and understand the implications of the changes introduced to achieve gender equity (Brunet et al, 2011; Brunet y Bocker, 2013).

5. Social practices and gender inequalities

In the fourth perspective or frame of analysis, gender is the set of social relations through which the male and female categories, male and female, acquire meaning and shape the experience. These categories are within social, political, historical circumstances, and develop from them. In addition, they are influenced in part by all other social relationships, including those of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age or sexual identity. Therefore, gender is not static or universal, its meaning and consequences are socially constructed. However, as far as we know today, it seems that gender has been constituted on the basis of power relations: the social relations that constitute gender are manifested in practices that act to preserve the predominance of the masculine. We refer to these social practices as gender. Organizations include at least four categories of social phenomena that either defend or challenge the value of men over that of women, the masculine over the feminine; that reinforce or challenge traditional interpretations of what it means to be a man or woman (Osborne, 1997, 2005). These social practices build the mechanisms that produce and justify the allocation of resources, information and opportunities in the culture of organizations. The four categories are: (1) formal policies and procedures; (2) informal work practices, standards and guidelines; (3) discourses, rhetoric, language, and other symbolic and unstructured expressions; (4) patterns of daily social interaction.

There are social practices that hide the gendered nature of other social practices. These are mainly discourses —symbolic representations, often transmitted through language, though not only through it— that individuals

believe give meaning to what happens around them. We understand that a reflection or analysis is necessary on how gender influences, explicitly or implicitly, competition and incompetence, commitment and lack of commitment, success and failure. The members of the organization assume that these discourses and the set of assumptions, preferences and interests on which they are based, are objective and independent of those who created them. Therefore, the function of naturalizing “things as they are” constitutes an invisible mechanism of legitimation. Some theorists of the organization have referred to these discourses as institutionalized myths, which construct as legitimate, neutral, and natural certain versions of reality that could otherwise be questioned.

For example, in a study of Ely and Padavic (2007) conducted to identify the causes of high turnover rates of women senior managers of the company continually attributed personal factors and idiosyncratic as an explanation for the failure of women, without paying attention to possible systemic factors. His understanding of the problem was that women and men are simply people, without gender identities; that occupy the same cultural, material, historical and political position; They participate in the same processes of the organization—which are neutral and impartial—and from the same personal interactions. These assumptions are, for them, indisputable. Thus, the speeches helped maintain existing agreements between genders, and only women were involved in their failures. Although this kind of narratives that legitimize gender inequalities are predominantly in the social practices of the company, there are other types of institutionalized social practices that can also serve as legitimating devices by excluding alternatives understanding.

For example, training plans for women who, implicitly, attribute certain company problems to deficits in women’s skills. Do not forget that there are other axes of inequality besides gender, such as race and class, for example. We can not limit ourselves to analyzing only one of the axes of inequality without thinking that they are connected to each other. When the coordination group in the organization and in the research team is more diverse, it can be clarified how individuals (of different sex, ethnicity, class) in their narratives neutralize and legitimize oppressive gender practices, and they do so multiple and complex ways (Gallego, 1994; García de León, 1994).

A greater diversity in a company, greater complexity and more nuances in their gender relations. The lack of diversity seems a particularly serious limitation in the identification of gender discourses, since the functions of neutralization and legitimation of the narratives remain stubbornly opaque. By limiting the interpretation of facts, these social practices are institutionalized as legitimate,

just as certain actions are taken as logical and rational; and it darkens those who deviate, making them look “strange or meaningless.” As a result, members of the organization have a relatively narrow range of possibilities before them to organize and carry out work, solve problems and make strategic planning. For example, organizations that suppress open discussion about the cultural identities of people at work are less likely to realize the potential benefits of a multicultural workforce. These types of narratives are guilty and insidious, once again, because their functions of neutralizing and legitimizing remain opaque, thus protecting “truth” beliefs that, otherwise, could be debatable.

The vision of gender equality that suggests this consideration of gender and its role in organizational life is a process by which the members of the organization continually identify and disrupt social practices that are oppressive about gender and, consequently, the modify. The intention of this reflection is to locate and put into practice a vision of work and a social interaction that is less limited by the roles, images, stereotypes and oppressive gender relations. It begins when members of the organization learn to question their own assumptions about roles, work, effectiveness, individual and organizational success. This process of reflection, learning and finally change over time allows transforming the organization, its members, and their relationships, redefining their sense of what it means to be male or female, male or female. The hard oppositions traditionally associated with gender will be broken, and begin to reveal more fluid conceptions of identity and social organization. The objective with this approach is to eliminate gender as an axis of power.

In any case, the analysis of gender in organizations goes beyond promoting gender equity. We propose that the objectives of promoting gender equality can serve as instrumental objectives of the organization since very often the same processes that generate gender inequalities also undermine the effectiveness of an organization. Intervening in these processes can therefore have a double effect. Many of the social practices of an organization are so deeply rooted in the beliefs and values of their time that it is taken for granted that simply “things are the way they are” and a neutral gender is assumed. Therefore, a gender analysis from this perspective: can also suggest formulas to improve the effectiveness of the organization. For example, regarding the so-called glass ceiling, which is a term that was initially coined by the US federal government department in the eighties of the twentieth century to refer to those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational prejudices that prevent vertical advancement in the organizations of qualified individuals (Segerman-Peck, 1991), but it is also used as a metaphorical image of the different barriers that seem transparent, at first

sight, but which act efficiently preventing women from having the capacity and necessary merits, reach positions of responsibility and a high professional goal. These limitations also impoverish and harm the organizations that make use of them, since they limit access to the maximum possible talent and potential of the organization. (Gil-Juarez *et alii* 2011).

Initiatives to change this state of affairs have had limited successes, which indicates even more clearly the force of institutionalized prejudices, that is, the restrictions imposed on the lives of women in patriarchal organizations. They are characterized by various forms of discrimination that charge an invisible price on their health (emotional and physical). The woman is still “the other person”, someone outside the objective organizational principles, and even if successful. Moreover, there are three types of discriminatory processes: visible barriers (the lack of facilities for the care of dependents, counseling for women...), invisible barriers (attitudes of prejudice, beliefs and behavior defined by men). ...), and the unconscious of the organization on the motivation of women, their self-esteem and the reflective relationship between the biographical context and knowledge.

The management positions are the area where power and authority are generated and replaced, the place where decisions are made and standards are developed. Therefore, access to these areas is a symbol and measure of the change of organizations. In this way, only when women reach the summit do they become a challenge and a threat to masculine power. Inequality for access to authority is a key mechanism to sustain gender inequalities in employment and work, that is, it is a significant cause of inequality and a key element for its reproduction throughout the organization.

Although it is increasingly valued in the feminine qualities, at the moment of truth for many women managers the masculine style of hardness and immediacy prevails. In addition, the expectations that also influence the behavior of men and women must be taken into account, since they reinforce models of action consistent with what is expected of them or them. While the stereotype that the leader is a man predominates, women will see their credibility deteriorate and the possibility of their being accepted as such. The more valuable a woman is, the more isolated she feels about other women. This isolation of other women with respect to those who have to differentiate, occurs to be able to stay in that position of access or proximity to power, and thus be able to differentiate from them, the others who have not achieved. In organizations, this way, a double isolation works: in the dimension of success-not success, differentiation with respect to women who have not promoted, and in the sex dimension, men-women, since they are still different from the group of men , those who are

not women. But this is true only for women and not for men. In fact, in the functioning of organizations, women are invisible and what they do, is of a lower category than what men do. The hidden barriers that impede the professional progress of women are a reaction against the apparent threat of women's rise to power. There is a mismatch between the image of the valuable professional, with success and responsibility, and the image of the "normal" woman. Women have the image of being servants, and the origin of this is the assumption that the natural woman is instinctive and hormonally tends to be maternal, sacrificial and caring for others prioritizing themselves. Society and organizations need to justify how to prevent women from being promoted to leadership positions. To do this, they construct a whole series of different mechanisms: for example, in the case of promotion, they limit and condition access or the distribution of power, excluding women from not recognizing their qualities as necessary and valuable for leadership (Nicolson, 1997; Brunet *et alii* 2011).

6. Gender differences in leadership styles

Ruiloba (2013) poses in relation to the problem of leadership that is an abstraction, a social construct that is related to other concepts —such as power, influence, authority or control—, in short, a concept where there is no definitive consensus, that, there are hundreds of definitions and a multitude of articles exclusively dedicated to clarifying what it is and what it consists of. On the other hand, studies on leadership often forget, or devote a residual space to the study of the influence of the gender variable in it. However, studying the few women who come to hold leadership positions is to study a minority, and therefore, says García de León (1994, 2002, 2005), a minority whose situation is peculiar and "anomalous", are "outsiders", are "elites discriminated against" by and despite their elite status given the high level of demands and / or accumulation of means they have to gather to access these positions. Such over-selection is reflected in the overabundance of means that characterize them, or what is the same, in the capacities accumulated in their people (both in symbolic and material terms) that allow them to pass the "funnel" that is created according to the activity it is more qualified or it is greater the overexertion required to overcome the superpluses that society demands (always in comparison with those required of men).

This leads to the political women themselves assuming this requirement normally (perceiving that in their same situation a male would obtain more political profitability in the case of having the same curriculum.) However, far from resorting to arguments of merit comparison with their male counterparts, when verbalizing lived experiences tend to emphasize the importance of their

merits (without making any special relationship with their sex.) It is the acquaintance, García de León points out, as “queen bee syndrome.” The elite strongly emphasize in their discourse their own merits as a justification to those who think they occupy the posts for “a quota.” Women in the political elite tend to be women with great resources, with a superabundance of economic, social and / or economic resources. The majority of them were already “elite” before occupying positions of political power (Barrera, 2000).

García de León (2002: 38) states that public life has a higher cost for women, given that they are subject to the same setbacks as men but “they must face a psychological over-selection that leads them to adapt to the male model of work and power “and a” surplus of social value “. In any place, “men continue to obtain higher and better positions, and women continue to be discriminated elites”. In addition, differences persist in all places, but while women tend to be more so when meritocratic free competition occurs, they seem to be more disregarded when confronted with cooptation systems. Precisely, one of the main barriers faced by women who want to access managerial positions is the organizational culture, in which male values predominate and in which there are still prejudices against women. Organizational culture operates as a barrier that maintains the glass ceiling or labyrinth and hinders women’s access to positions of responsibility.

In the majority of investigations, it is argued that leadership and leadership styles are different, since we are told that no significant gender differences have been found in terms of the characteristics of the work teams or how to manage them. However, differences were detected with respect to the qualities that are identified and valued by the directives. They present a greater relative identification with the intuition and the formative aspirations, they with the disposition to delegate. In relation to the members of the teams, they seem more inclined to intervene while they present a greater coercive and tax tendency. For example, based on the distinction proposed by Burns (1978), Bass (1985) developed a model in which he distinguished between “transformational” leadership style-leaders who produce changes in the scale of values, attitudes, and beliefs of their followers. through his personal influence- and the “transactional” -characterized by the establishment of a kind of transaction between the leader and the members of his group-. Basically, “transformational” leadership is made up of four factors or dimensions: charisma or idealized influence (the leader’s ability to evoke a vision and gain the trust of his followers), inspiration or inspirational motivation (the leader’s ability to communicate his vision), intellectual stimulation (the leader’s ability to make their subordinates think creatively and innovatively) and individualized consideration (the leader’s ability to give personal attention to all

members of their team, making them see that their individual contribution is important).

On the other hand, “transactional” leadership is made up of two factors: contingent reward (the ability of leaders to reward subordinates for a job well done) and direction by exception (leaders who intervene only when things go wrong to reprimand or punish his subordinates). This last factor can take two forms: active (the leader intervenes before a problem occurs) and passive (the leader intervenes when the problem has already occurred). Well, due to the recent and novel nature of most of the research carried out on gender differences in “transformational” — “transactional” styles, the results obtained are also characterized by heterogeneity. Thus, in some studies men and women do not seem to differ in their leadership styles, or the differences are not consistent (since the results vary depending on who carries out the evaluations: superiors and leaders vs. subordinates, or the results vary depending on the occupied by the leader). On the other hand, the rest of the studies conclude that, in general, women are more “transformational” than men and adopt to a greater extent than these the behaviors of “contingent reward” or, simply, that the leadership style of women it is more “transformational” than that of men, and theirs is more “transactional”.

For women, even those with a long professional experience, the function considered appropriate to the female sex seems unavoidable and overflows affecting other functions. First, to the extent that skills and experiences resulting from socialization differentiated by gender and acquired at home and in family life are used at work, and secondly when professional women assume the tensions of carrying out their work double role. Thus, it is pointed out that when it comes to exercising power or directing, priority must be given to the education process that sets the parameters of behavior that are considered acceptable for each sex. Men learn to command, to use visual qualities, to be strategists, and to consider others as collaborators or adversaries, and women to create and maintain productive relationships, to value achievements based on internal rules and to provide services to others. This has repercussions, Fierman says (1990), on their behavior and leads them to reject the paraphernalia of power and to prefer *centrarquías* rather than hierarchies. They are, therefore, less hierarchical and more participatory than men who have an attitude towards the essentially instrumental world, based on domination, manipulation and individualism. These studies conclude that there are still gender stereotypes that are reflected, later, in the attribution of managerial characteristics to men and women.

These stereotypes, Ruiloba argues (2013: 147), relying on Rosener (1990), would influence the leadership style and cause men to focus more on control, power and hierarchy, while women would emphasize the orientation toward people, participation, relationships and the willingness to delegate power, on the one hand, with a more interactive leadership style (as is repeated repeatedly in almost all of these investigations, women's leadership encourages participation, makes the people feel part of the organization, value their contributions and opinions, worry about the symbolic aspects, enhance the power of others and agree that it is positive to share power and information, and, on the other hand, fostering humanist organizational values. democratic (rather than governed by a more traditional pyramidal bureaucratic value system and usually attributed to males) and a leader style Transformational change Most organizations are still guided by hierarchical and bureaucratic values, which leads to distrustful relationships and a decrease in the success of that organization to solve the problems that arise. On the contrary, in organizations that are governed by democratic-humanist values (more typical of the feminine leadership style), interpersonal competence, cooperation and the effectiveness of the organization increase”.

Davidson and Cooper (1992) called the trap of culture the phenomenon derived from learning the role of sex among women, which takes place mainly during the early stages of life, but as we have seen is reinforced and fed back along all his life. This trap generates a mental aptitude that creates a series of difficulties especially in the working life because it is developed in a masculinized space in which these values and experiences are not valued or taken into account, they can even be grounds for discrediting or the exclusion. In this sense, the characteristics that are usually associated with the role of leader (such as power, authority, achievement, and competition) are also more frequently associated with the male gender role than the female one. In this way, the perception of congruence between the role of the male gender and the role of leader is favored, and the perception of incongruence between the role of the female gender and the role of leader. This fact can be favored by the different patterns of causal attributions that are made about the successes and failures of men and women.

In general, these considerations, García-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006) point out, will give rise to several transcendental consequences. Thus, for example, it has been proven that men generally have more influence at the group level than women. As a result, women tend to adopt those characteristics that are more often attributed to men when they want to be perceived as leaders and have authority, and feel less comfortable in positions that imply power or command than men.

Moreover, women experience discrimination in jobs usually dominated by men, as they are perceived as especially incongruent with their gender role. This fact explains the low percentage of women who assume a position of leadership in companies considered proper to the masculine gender, and the consequent segregation of men and women in the different jobs. In this sense, there has been much talk in favor of women in positions of responsibility and in the style of female management, highlighting that it is more just and more democratic than the style of men. However, although gender differences should not be ignored, it is essential to understand them from the context in order to be able to recognize inequality and thus be able to make changes. It is necessary to recognize that in the world of business and the professions, typically female behavior is not valued by people who hold the power, nor is it considered effective in relation to the objectives and professionals.

7. By way of conclusion

In contrast to other theoretical perspectives, our understanding of gender in organizations is based on the idea that organizations are inherently gendered as a result of having been created by and for men. Its gendered nature has been maintained through practices that organize and explain the structuring of daily life both within organizations and abroad. These practices reflect gender issues, in the form of masculine-feminine dichotomies, that have deeply ingrained in organizations, and are so deeply rooted these dichotomies that seem to be gender-neutral. However, because they are rooted in the life and experiences of men, these social practices tend, often subtly and insidiously, to privilege men and harm women. Therefore, a different approach should be chosen, focused on the systemic change of the organization through which the members of the organization can identify, misalign and modify oppressive social practices. In this sense, we point out that the understanding of how gender affects people, thoughts, feelings and behaviors at work requires changing the object of study of gender differences to the characteristics of organizations that build men and women as similar or different. With this we also point out that gender differences are only a sign of the historical, cultural and organizational processes that need explanation. But, "even more: with the incorporation of women to traditionally masculine institutions and organizations, the masculinity of these entities has ended up being questioned" (Osborne, 2005: 176). This article responds to this situation and to the need to develop more consistent theoretical constructions, otherwise we want to continue reproducing inequality. In fact, having a good theoretical basis when examining gender differences is important, because the

“essentialist” considerations that legitimize inequalities can fill the gap left by the lack of well-founded theoretical bases (Walby, 2009; Cruells e Ybarra, 2013). Not taking this into account is ignoring that the truth “can not be understood as an entity free of interpretation” (López, 2011: 12).

8. References

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