Why Women don’t Lean in: Understanding how context constrains women's career choices

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Abstract:
There has been vast improvement in workplace gender equality, but there remain marked differences in the roles in which women and men work. Explanations for this inequality have focused on the barriers women face. However, as small numbers of women begin to enter male-dominated roles, a new explanation has arisen: that remaining gender inequality must reflect fundamental differences between women and men, including differences in (a) ambition and desire for power, (b) needs for work-life balance, and (c) willingness to take career risks. Central to this analysis is the assumption that the glass ceiling is broken and thus inequality must be due to women’s active choices. I will present a preliminary programme of research that demonstrates that women’s choices are shaped and constrained by the gendered nature of organisational and social contexts and how women see themselves within these contexts.

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