

PRESS RELEASE

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No one wants women to succeed...not even women!

In their ground breaking new book, *The Invention of Difference*, business psychologists Jo and Binna Kandola reveal that up until the industrial revolution, there was less gender segregation in the work undertaken by men and women than is observed today. Historically women performed a wide range of roles both inside and outside the home. "For example, in the 13th century, there were female carpenters and masons," says Binna, "so the division of labour we see today is a relatively new development. It was only during the industrial revolution that the idea of the male 'breadwinner' emerged, and a woman's role became increasingly idealised and focused on the home and family."

The negative effect of positive stereotypes

Stereotyping of the sexes is still going strong and prevents organisations from achieving diversity the authors argue. Female stereotypes may now be more positive than they once were, but women are generally labelled with traits such as being caring or nurturing, which are not deemed as valuable in a business context as 'male' traits, such as being decisive. By accepting these positive stereotypes, women have in effect allowed themselves to be portrayed as less capable and less valuable employees.

"There is overwhelming evidence that there are no genuine differences between the genders in the context of work," says Jo Kandola, "but perpetuating the idea of differences means women continue to be held back in their careers – particularly when it comes to leadership roles."

The authors look at how organisations can take action. "Recognising bias in an organisation – and having the will to change it – are both key to eliminating prejudice against women in the workplace," says Jo. "Challenging bias is everybody's responsibility. We all need to make it part of everything we do."

The Invention of Difference is published by Pearn Kandola Publishing and is available from www.pearnkandola.com and www.amazon.com. *The Invention of Difference* follows Binna Kandola's critically-acclaimed book, *The Value of Difference*, published in 2009, which examined unconscious bias and how to eliminate it in organisations.

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