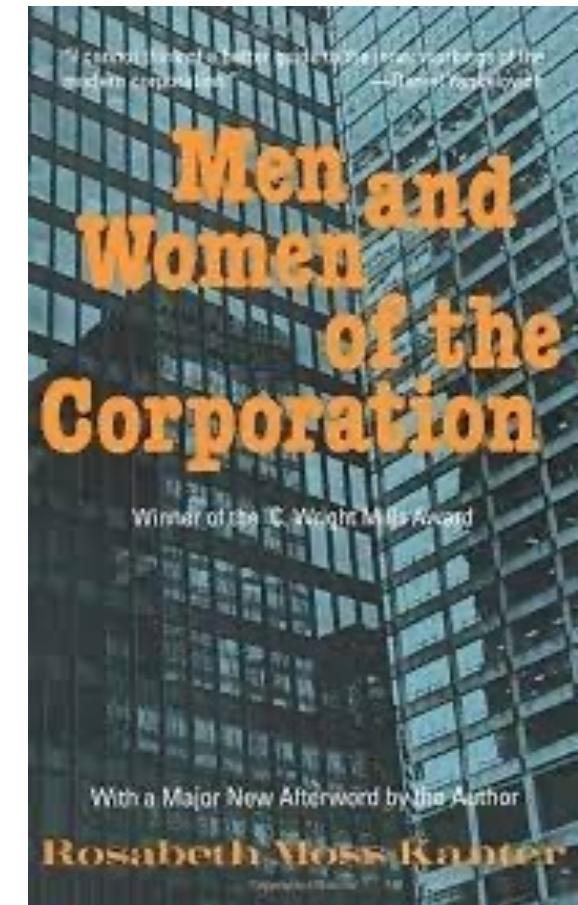


Tokenism, Glass Escalators, and Intersectionality

March 1, 2023

Tokenism

- Being a member of a highly under-represented minority in an occupation affects:
 - one's social experiences on the job
 - one's likelihood of advancing and staying in a career
- Kanter (1977) uses the example when women are the tokens in men-dominated corporations



Dimensions of Tokenism

Visibility

Contrast

Assimilation

1. Visibility

- Being a member of a minority group makes you **highly visible** to others in the organization:
 - Means you are seen as a representative of your group:
 - Your behavior can have symbolic consequences because actions reflect strongly on the characterization of the entire group
 - Symbols of 'how-women-can-do' (Kanter 1997:207)
 - Creates performance pressure, stress
 - Leads to work being more heavily scrutinized, devalued

How does visibility manifest socially?

- Gossip
- “A woman swore in an elevator in an Atlanta hotel while going to have drinks with colleagues, and it was known all over Chicago a few days later that she was a ‘radical’” (Kanter 1997:212)

How does visibility manifest socially?

- Easily remembered ...especially for missteps
- “If it seems good to be noticed, wait until you make your first major mistake”

How does visibility manifest socially?

- Used as advertising for company

president to escort her. So she went, and found she was there to represent the corporation's "prize women," symbolizing the strides made by women in business. The program for the affair listed the women executives from participating companies, except in the case of Indesco, where the male vice-presidential escorts were listed instead. Pictures were taken for the employee newsletter and, a few days later, she received an inscribed paperweight as a memento. She told the story a few weeks after the event with visible embarrassment about being "taken on a date. It was more like a senior prom than a business event." And she expressed resentment at being singled out in such a fashion, "just for being a woman at Indesco, not for any real achievement." Similar sentiments were expressed by a woman

How does visibility manifest socially?

- Symbolic representatives:
 - “Speak about this as a woman”
 - Evaluated by 2 standards in every interaction - how behaved as women and how behaved as manager
 - Felt that behavior was seen as reflective of entire group
 - Stereotype threat

Token Response to Visibility

- Try to be socially invisible
 - Usually resulted in career stagnation
- Overachieve 'nicely'
 - Requires high level of competence at job immediately and good social skills
 - Worked best for older women
- Use visibility for benefit and deal with social consequences
 - Risky - not often successful
 - Sometimes resulted in these women becoming gatekeepers for other women

Double Bind

...fired a woman for **not being aggressive enough** and then reprimanded another woman who had “brought in the largest amount of new business during the past year...for being ‘**too aggressive, too much of a hustler**’”

2. Contrast - Boundary maintenance

- Dominant members emphasize differences between dominant group and minority group
- When women were present in informal social situations, men were more likely to:
 - Talk about how 'masculine prowess' led to success – sexual innuendos or stories, sexual harassment, stories of aggression
 - Women report feeling 'tested'
- "Can we still____ now that women are here?"

2. The two-man, one-woman team was selling wigs; the woman was the wig stylist. The buyer on whom they were calling adopted an exaggerated homosexual caricature, which broadened considerably during the "sales call." Toward the end of the role play, one of the men, trying to wrap up the sale, said, "We have other special services along with wigs. Other women who work with our stylist will come to your store to work for you." The buyer's response made it clear that he would be interested in those women sexually (though he was simulating homosexuality). Said the seller, "They'll be on your payroll; you can use them any way you want." Said the buyer, leering, "*Any* way I want?" The seller answered, "We might offer other services like a massage along with the wig." Said the buyer, "That sounds interesting. Can I have one right now?"

How does contrast manifest socially?

Informal mechanisms of gatekeeping

- who gets invited to hang out, grab a beer, etc.
- Mixing business and pleasure at men-only organizations
- “pre-meeting meetings”

Loyalty tests

- “What are you girls talking about?”
- Show loyalty by keeping other women down
- “one of the guys”
- Okay being butt of the joke

'High performing' women can become gatekeepers themselves

Women, she said, were unreliable and likely to quit; furthermore, young women might marry men who would not allow them to work. (She herself quit a few years later.) In this case, a token woman was taking over “gatekeeping” functions for dominants, letting them appear free of prejudice while a woman acted to exclude other women.¹⁸

3. Assimilation

- Visibility + Contrast make the social characteristic that is different between the dominant and minority group **salient**
 - in this case, activates gender beliefs about how men should act and how women should act
- The consequences are that members of the minority group are **influenced** to fill stereotypical role behavior
 - Must fill the organizational niche available to them

Others' treatment

- Being mistaken for:
 - Secretary
 - Man co-worker's wife
 - Man co-worker's assistant
 - Being expected to do:
 - Secretarial work
 - Treated in markedly gendered ways for typical business behavior
-
- “A professional woman at Indsco asked for a promotion and talked about looking for a better job; her manager’s first assumption was that she did not feel “loved” and it was his fault for failing to give love to a woman.” (Kanter 1977)

Kanter's Types

Mother

- Expected to nurture, emotionally soothe men co-workers

Seductress

- Seen as sexually desirable, available (may be intentional or put-upon by 'protector' men)

Pet

- Treated as a cheerleader for men coworkers
- 'look-what-she-can-do-and-she's-only-a-woman'

Iron Maiden

- Strong/tough, cold - aband

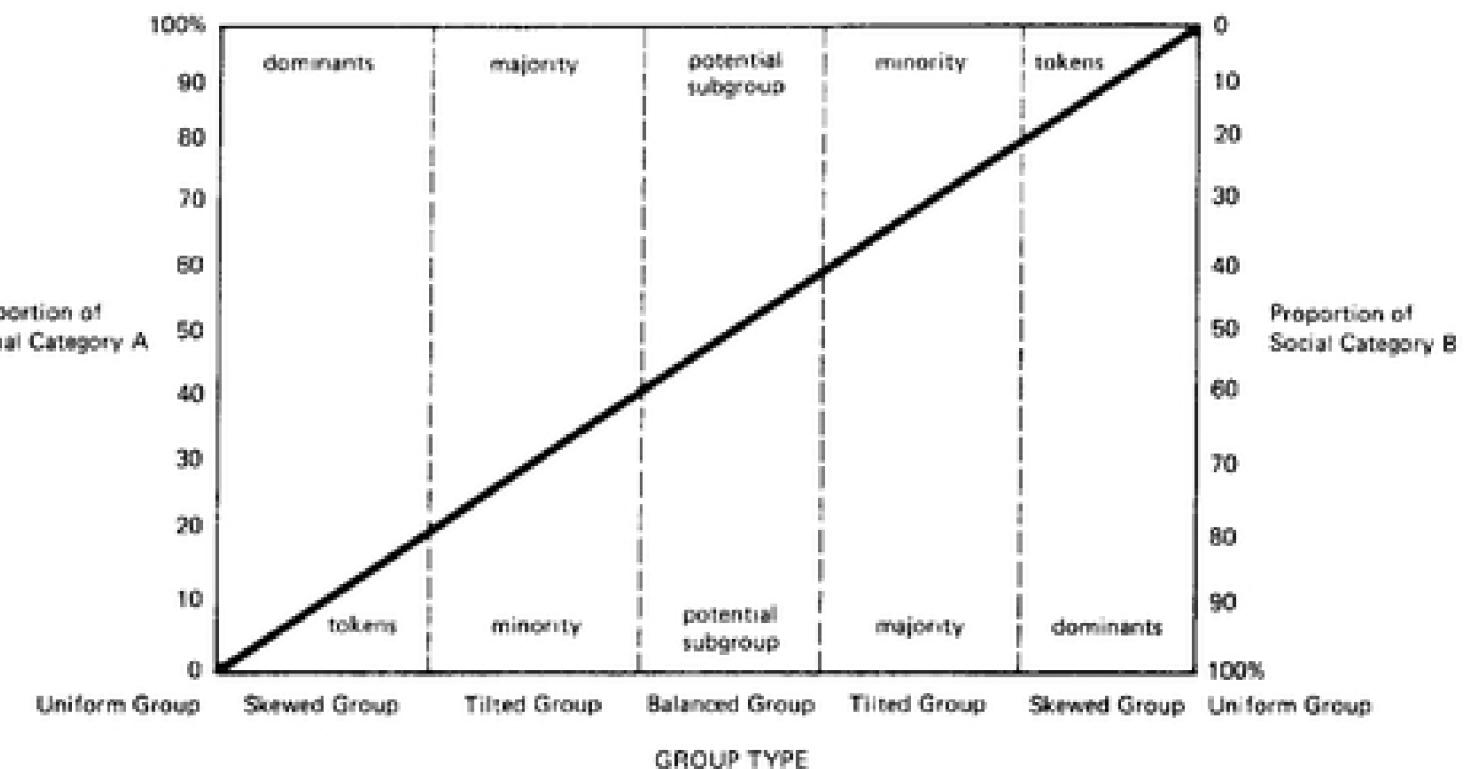
Example

- Nine to Five
 - Lily Tomlin = Iron Maiden
 - Dolly Parton = Seductress
 - Jane Fonda = Pet



Kanter's Conclusions

- This is a consequence of numbers:
 - Mechanisms of tokenism will occur below the 15/85 minority/majority percentage line



What is the glass escalator?

Why is it different for (white) men in women-dominated industries?

- Visibility
- Contrast
- Assimilation

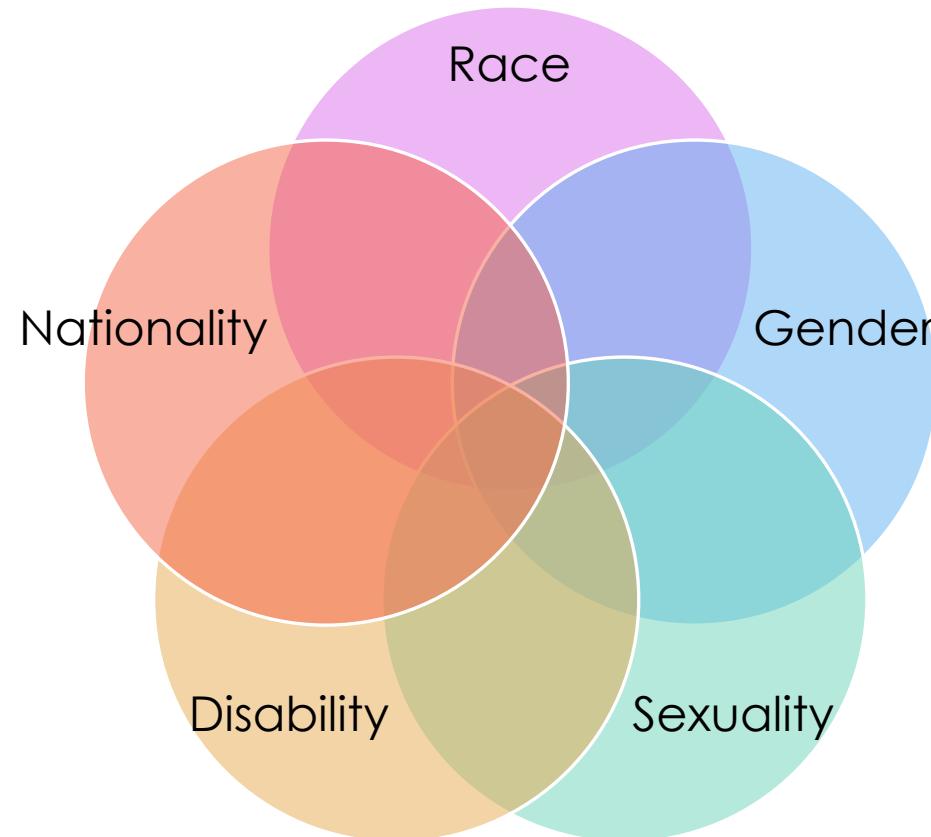
Why is it different for (white) men in women-dominated industries?

- Relationships with colleagues and supervisors
- Impressions of 'suitability' for work
- Distancing from femininity
- Discrimination from outsiders
 - Fears over men in female-dominated occupations being pedophiles/sexual abusers

How did Wingfield complicate the findings by focusing on Black men in women-dominated industries?

- Visibility
- Contrast
- Assimilation

Intersectionality



Intersectionality

- What it means to be a man is different for:
 - Black men
 - White men
- What it means to be a woman is different for:
 - Black women
 - White women
- Not additive – overlapping, can produce distinct outcomes

Controlling Images

