3 *Promoting racial diversity at work: Challenges and solutions*

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From social stratification to workplace discrimination: Six decades of sociological inquiry

Studies of social class, social stratification, and social mobility – inquiries into how aspects of one's social origins facilitate or limit one's career success as an adult – have a long and distinguished history in American sociology, dating back to the 1940s (Davis and Moore, 1945; Warner, Meeker, and Bells, 1949; Gordon, 1949; 1958; Lipset and Bendix, 1959; Blau and Duncan, 1967). However, sociological scholarship on how workplace policies and practices limit or promote equal employment opportunity ("EEO") is a relatively recent phenomenon, and the discipline all but ignored workplace racial bias prior to the 1970s.

It should be no surprise that American sociologists began to take notice of racial bias in employment around the same time as the rest of the country. The counts in Figure 3.1 are based on 80% or higher relevancy scores in a JSTOR search in the discipline's premier journals, *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology* for the terms "race or racial" and "discrimination or bias" and "employment or jobs or careers" and "organization or firm or workplace." Similar patterns to those in Figure 3.1 are evident when I include other journals or somewhat broader search terms. The civil rights and student movements, urban unrest, and landmark legislation of the 1960s motivated sociological inquiry in much the same way it shaped political discourse. The upturn in the 1970s also reflects the growth of increasingly sophisticated quantitative studies of social inequality and mobility, many of them focusing at least in part on differences by race and ethnicity.

By the 1970s, economists' market-based accounts had become the primary counterpoint to sociological studies of racial inequality. Although not always explicitly framing their scholarship as a critique

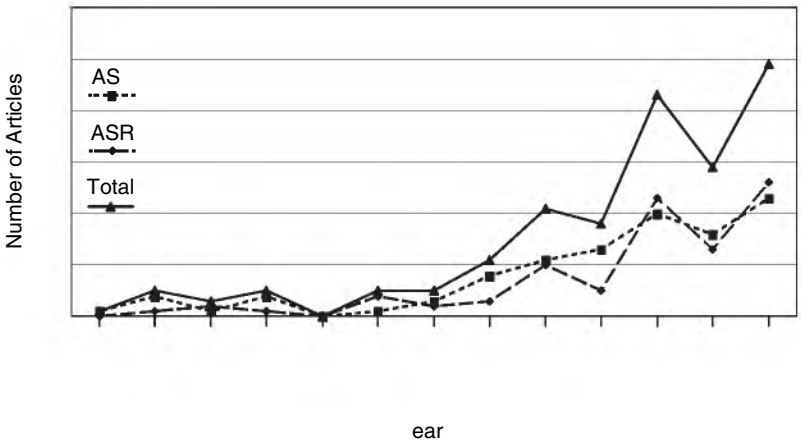

Figure 3.1 *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology* articles on workplace racial bias, 1936–2000

of market models, sociologists nonetheless sought to show that racial disparities in occupational status and earnings could not be fully reduced to differences between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in schooling, job experience, and other kinds of human capital. Instead, they emphasized the "dual" or "segmented" nature of labor markets that posed structural barriers to racial parity in career outcomes (e.g., Beck, Horan, and Tolbert, 1980; Kalleberg, Wallace, and Althauser, 1981; Hodson and Kaufman, 1982; Kaufman, 1986; Semyonov, 1988). Although stratification researchers were often skeptical of economists' assumptions about rational, goal-directed, maximizing behavior, they took little notice of research by psychologists on stereotypes, in-group favoritism, conformity, and related cognitive processes that might be linked to workplace bias.[1]

[1] A notable exception is Kanter's (1977) research on the dynamics of tokenism in the workplace. Kanter's theory, consistent with psychological research on stereotyping, is based on the notion that tokens – e.g., the sole woman or person of color in a work setting – are perceived and evaluated by supervisors and coworkers based on their social category (gender or race) and not according to personal qualities and contributions. Although Kanter's work is widely cited in sociological studies of racial and gender inequality, it has been used by sociologists primarily as a structural theory about the consequences of relative numbers, not as a way to understand the social psychological mechanisms implicated in workplace discrimination. Similarly, sociologists invoke the

The "new structuralism" of the 1980s gave rise to a focus on specific features of workplaces that shape socioeconomic inequality (Baron, Davis-Blake, and Bielby, 1986; DiPrete and Soule, 1986; Podolny and Baron, 1997; Fernandez and Weinberg, 1997; Bielby and Bielby, 1999; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson, 2000) and disparities in career outcomes by race and gender (Baron and Newman, 1990; Barnett, Baron, and Stewart, 2000; Zwerling and Silver, 2002). By the 1990s, sociologists working in this tradition were much more accepting of economists' perspectives, especially in the application of market concepts and models to understanding how organizational arrangements provide efficient solutions to issues relating to information uncertainty, ambiguity, risk, and trust (Baron and Pfeffer, 1994; Lie, 1997; Menger, 1999; Kalleberg, 2000; Fountain, 2005). In any case, from the 1970s through the 1990s, sociological scholarship on social inequality and on workplace disparities by race, ethnicity, and gender developed largely in isolation from the explosive growth in psychological research on stereotyping and cognitive bias. Keeping an eye on and reacting to economists' claims about having a more complete account of workplace disparities by gender and race, sociologists almost missed the "cognitive turn" illuminated by psychological research on the cognitive basis for unequal treatment.

While structuralist sociologists, both new and old, tended to ignore the cognitive, normative, or "softer" sources of workplace inequality, that was not true of the "new institutionalists," who developed an important line of research in the 1990s on organizational responses to EEO laws and regulations. Unlike the structuralists, who focused on how workplace structures and policies differentially shaped the actual career trajectories of majority and minority groups, these scholars studied how such arrangements were used to signal to external constituencies, especially the courts and government regulators, that the organization was taking an appropriate stance towards its EEO obligations (Edelman, 1990; 1992; Edelman *et al*., 1991; Sutton *et al*., 1994; Edelman and Petterson, 1999; Bisom-Rapp, 1999). They showed that once structures such as grievance procedures, affirmative action offices, and formal promotion systems become widely adopted, they

concept of stereotyping to understand the rationale for "statistical discrimination" (hiring and assigning jobs based on assumptions about group attributes rather than individual qualifications and interests), but they rarely study workplace stereotyping as a cognitive process (Bielby and Baron, 1986).

become taken-for-granted, imbued with symbolic meaning, and accepted as rational and appropriate by constituencies both inside and outside the organization (Edelman *et al.*, 1991; Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger, 1999; Dobbin *et al.*, 1993; Edelman, Fuller, and Mara-Ditra, 2001). Moreover, the presence of such structures comes to be viewed as evidence of EEO compliance by the courts, further reinforcing their widespread adoption, regardless of (or even in spite of) their actual impact on reducing bias and enhancing diversity (Edelman, Erlanger, and Lande, 1993; Edelman, 2005; Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelley, 2005).

The "cognitive turn" – incorporating recent work by psychologists on stereotyping and cognitive bias – finally came to sociology in the new millennium, largely through the writings of Barbara Reskin. In an important article published in 2000, Reskin argued that sociological approaches to workplace bias, which emphasize the impact of workplace structures on personnel outcomes, had ignored *how* the many routine personnel decisions about hiring, job assignment, training, promotion, and compensation made daily in organizations are done in such a way as to disadvantage women and persons of color (Reskin, 2000). She argued that cognitive social psychologists' research on automatic or implicit bias against minorities and women provides unique insights into the proximate causes of workplace discrimination which mediate the impact of organizational structures, policies, and practices. Noting that cognitive biases "occur independently of decision-makers' group interests or their conscious desire to favor or harm others," Reskin recommended that sociologists should direct their research efforts to enhance our understanding of how workplace policies and practices facilitate or minimize the impact of these cognitive processes on personnel decisions (Reskin, 2000, pp. 320–323; also see Bielby, 2000; Reskin, 2003).

The "cognitive turn" in sociology came none to soon. In the past few years psychologists' important and ever-expanding work on implicit, subconscious, or "hidden" bias has been embraced by human resource professionals (Babcock, 2006; Stockdale and Crosby, 2003), attorneys (Harris and Boddy, 2004; Dichter and Burkhardt, 2005); and by legal scholars and the courts (Krieger, 1995; Kang, 2005; Lee, 2005; Bielby, 2005; Hart, 2004, 2005; *Dukes* v. *Wal-Mart Stores Inc.*, 2004), and it is increasingly the focus of attention and scrutiny from the press and electronic media (Orey, 2006; Wax and Tetlock, 2005; Lehrman,

2006; Bower, 2006; Scheck, 2004). Articles such as "Detecting hidden bias: you may not see it, but it's probably lurking among your managers – and perhaps even in you," which appeared in the Society for Human Resource Development's *HR Magazine* (Babcock, 2006), summarize the scientific research on cognitive bias, alert companies to the ways it is manifested in the workplace, and offer interventions for minimizing its impact. In a related genre, law firms that represent employers in discrimination litigation note the potential legal liability due to the impact of hidden bias and suggest policies and practices that are claimed to reduce vulnerability to expensive lawsuits, as in the article appearing in Morrison and Foerster's online newsletter, "Sex discrimination and merit-based compensation: is your system at risk?" (Harris and Boddy, 2004). And for companies that find themselves already in litigation over claims of unconscious bias, attorneys who represent employers are promoting in firm newsletters, webpages, and legal workshops increasingly sophisticated attacks on social science experts. For example, attorneys from Morgan, Lewis and Bockius recently gave a presentation titled "Class certification after Wal-Mart" which included the subsection, "the subjective decision making theory and expert stereotype testimony in class cases: how to attack" (Dichter and Burkhardt, 2005). With social science expert testimony on stereotypes and implicit bias increasingly common in class action discrimination lawsuits, that body of scholarship is now embedded in case law, and legal scholars have begun to analyze both how it is shaping litigation dynamics and how legal doctrine might be reformed to be more consistent with new understandings of the cognitive bases of discrimination (Krieger, 1995; Hart, 2005).

Besides following Reskin's lead and incorporating theory and research on cognitive bias into our own scientific work on workplace bias, sociologists can and should play an important role in explaining to constituencies outside the discipline how and why the social, institutional, and organizational context matters if we are to fully understand how stereotyping and related cognitive processes are implicated in workplace discrimination. Rejecting this role poses four significant risks. First, it reinforces the perception that discrimination occurs simply because of individuals' personal shortcomings, i.e., their inability to overcome the automatic tendency to make categorical judgments based on race or gender, regardless of social context. Second, as a result, it invites reform proposals that focus exclusively on individual

and interpersonal processes – training to make people aware of stereotypes, programs to enhance interdependence and teamwork, etc. (see Babcock, 2006). Third, by highlighting automatic or unconscious processes at the level of individual cognition, it avoids addressing the ways organizations act to structure decision-making contexts so that cognitive biases are allowed to affect personnel decisions. Fourth, it avoids addressing the responsibility organizations have for taking steps to ensure that the impact of cognitive bias is minimized and analyzing the effectiveness of any efforts an organization takes along those lines. Sociologists have much to contribute in each of these areas, based on decades of research on the organizational and institutional contexts of workplace bias, but too often our attention is focused narrowly on specific hypotheses defined by the subfields in which we work and not on the implications of our work for those who care about addressing workplace bias and diversity in the "real world." It is indeed ironic that psychologists, who are generally much more oriented towards the "ivory tower" and inclined to avoid being drawn into debates about the social implications of their scientific research, have come to dominate public discourse about workplace bias.

Accordingly, the review that I present here aims to redress this imbalance, at least in part. My primary goal is to explain how work by organizational sociologists and by management studies scholars informs our understanding of workplace racial bias and the challenges of and opportunities for promoting racial diversity at work. In contrast to scholarship on gender and work, the sociological research on workplace racial bias has been less widely reviewed and receives much less attention, apart from studies of urban poverty and low-wage jobs. Thus, while much of what I review applies equally to gender issues in the workplace, a secondary goal of mine is to increase the visibility of sociological work that informs understanding of racial bias and racial diversity in employment.

While I summarize research on stereotypes and cognitive bias, I do so only briefly, since my focus is on the context that shapes how those social psychological processes influence workplace outcomes, not the processes themselves. The scholarship on stereotypes and cognitive bias has been reviewed expertly and thoroughly by Fiske and Lee in chapter 2 of this volume. Besides reviewing the work of sociologists relevant to workplace racial bias and diversity, I review in some detail studies on bias in performance assessment systems, mostly by industrial

psychologists, since it too has a focus on systemic features of organizational systems that shape how cognitive bias is manifested in the workplace. A theme I want to emphasize is that scientific literature produced by organizational sociologists, social psychologists, and management scholars provides scientifically valid and practically useful information about how organizational policies and practices create and sustain barriers to equal employment opportunity for persons of color and about the kinds of policies and practices that promote racial diversity in the workplace.

I also cite liberally to professional literature from the fields of human resources and diversity management, highlighting similarities and differences between practitioners' and social scientists' understandings of the sources of workplace racial bias and the kinds of policies and practices that minimize it. Where similarities exist, it is often because the work of organizational professionals charged with addressing equal employment opportunity in the "real world" generates practical knowledge consistent with the findings of social scientists, although practitioners are increasingly turning to the work of social scientists for insights (e.g., Babcock, 2006). At the same time, it is important to understand that parishioners orient to organizational goals and professional agendas that place multiple and conflicting demands on them, often leading to a focus on symbol rather than substance in the area of EEO and racial bias (Edelman *et al.*, 1991; Edelman, 1992; Bisom-Rapp, 1999). Sustained, systematic, peer-reviewed scientific analysis of issues related to workplace racial bias and diversity by scholars who are free from such concerns generates knowledge which is mostly unaffected by those demands and both helps inform the work of practitioners and place it in perspective.

The research I rely upon and cite here has applied multiple methodologies in a variety of contexts, including experiments in controlled laboratory settings; ethnographies and case studies in "real world" organizations both large and small, public and private, and in a range of industries; surveys done with representative samples of workers and employers; and historical studies based on archival materials from the United States and abroad. I believe that the scientific evidence about bias, discrimination, and the structure and dynamics of race in organizations has substantial external validity and provides a sound basis for understanding the sources of subtle racial bias in the workplace and how to minimize it.

I focus on the kinds of "subtle" bias one finds in contemporary workplaces – bias that is sometimes unconscious at the level of individual action, often unintended at the organizational level, and more often than not unexamined by those who formulate, implement, and oversee an organization's human resources system. I am not addressing blatant, racially motivated bias that results in a company never hiring or always favoring white employees over equally qualified minorities. I am not denying that such blatant racism exists in contemporary work settings, with real consequences for those who are subject to it. That kind of racism is relatively easy to detect in the workplace, and the organizational and legal interventions for effectively responding to it are relatively straightforward. In contrast, when it comes to subtle forms of racial bias and barriers to equal employment opportunity, there is a greater gap between social science knowledge and organizational practice. However, that gap has closed in recent years, although the relevant social science expertise comes from different disciplines and across a range of subfields. The review below aims to provide an integrated overview of that diverse work in order to make it more accessible to both human resources practitioners and scholars.

"Subtle bias" in organizational context: How discretionary and subjective practices allow stereotypes and bias to affect personnel decisions

Decades of social science research on stereotypes and other forms of cognitive bias show us how barriers to workplace racial diversity become embedded in workplace policies and practices, often in ways that are not often apparent to those who make personnel decisions. While I emphasize here social science research that addresses racial bias in the workplace, I also cite studies addressing gender bias. In addition, research on racial bias in the workplace and remedies for minimizing it usually generalizes to gender bias, and vice versa.

Sources of workplace racial disparities

Depending on the job, organizational setting, and work environment, there are many reasons why whites and non-whites can have different career trajectories. For example, jobs may have job-related skill and experience requirements that differ, on average, by race or ethnicity.

Racial disparities arising from such factors would not be considered discriminatory, so long as the employer is not responsible for differences in qualifications by race (e.g., by not providing equal access to training). Conversely, employers create racial barriers when they make decisions about individuals' suitability for jobs, training, advancement, or compensation based on beliefs about a person's race or favoritism towards their own racial group rather than on an individual's actual qualifications or performance. Employers also create racial barriers when they ignore (or encourage) an organizational climate that is hostile towards members of racial minorities and inhibits them from performing to their full potential.

Stereotypes, bias, and discretion

A large body of social science research shows that personnel decisions such as decisions about hiring, job assignment, promotion selections, performance assessment, and compensation are vulnerable to stereotyping and bias when they are based on the discretionary use of subjective criteria. A stereotype is a set of beliefs that links personal traits of individuals to specific social groups (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005; Fiske *et al*., 2002; Dovidio *et al*., 1996; Mackie *et al*., 1996; Evans and Tyler, 1986). The association of such traits as "assertive" and "rational" with the category male, "nurturing" and "emotional" with the category female, "violent" and "hostile" with the category African American, and "gang-banger" and "macho" with Latino, are examples of stereotypes. When stereotypes such as these are allowed to influence social judgments, decisions about members of minority groups will be based on general beliefs about the behaviors, traits, and qualities associated with their gender or race/ethnicity instead of the actual traits of the individuals being judged (Dasgupta, 2004; Dovidio and Gaertner, 1993; Devine, 1989; Devine and Elliot, 1995; Brewer and Brown, 1998; Messick and Mackie, 1989; Nieva and Gutek, 1980; Word, Zanna, and Cooper, 1974).

Substantial discretion in assessing and weighing evaluative criteria invites bias. For example, social psychologists Samuel Gaertner and John Dovidio have conducted research showing that when white evaluators have discretion in how to weigh evaluative criteria, they tend to do so selectively, in a way that biases outcomes in favor of white ratees. In one part of their study, participants were told they were assisting a

university in making admission decisions, and they were given information on factors such as test scores and high school grades for (hypothetical) African American and white applicants. When applicants were strong on one dimension and weak on the other, raters tended to give the stronger dimension a greater weight for white applicants and the weaker one a greater weight for African American applicants (Hodson, Dovidio, and Gaertner, 2002). In other words, they exercised their discretion in a way that ensured that whites would rank on top. The authors summarize their findings as follows (Gaertner *et al.*, 2005, p. 384):

> White college participants (whom, relative to the general population may be regarded as generally moderate to low prejudiced . . .), give White candidates the "benefit of the doubt," a benefit they do not extend to Blacks.

In a study of gender bias with a similar experimental design, Eric Uhlmann and Geoffrey Cohen found that when given discretion on defining and weighing qualifications, evaluators redefined criteria of success so that men were assigned to stereotypically male jobs and females were assigned to stereotypically female jobs (Uhlmann and Cohen, 2005; also see Norton, Vandello, and Darley, 2004). They concluded (p. 474) that "even without ambiguity in applicants' credentials, the criteria used to assess merit can be defined flexibly in a manner congenial to the idiosyncratic strengths of applicants who belong to desired groups." By acting in this way, decision-makers can justify biased decisions by appealing to seemingly "objective" criteria. In their words (p. 479):

> Bias in the construction of job criteria allows evaluators both to discriminate and to maintain a personal illusion of objectivity. Although gender stereotypes encourage discrimination, egalitarian norms compel making hiring decisions on the basis of applicants' merit rather than their group membership. These conflicting pressures can be reconciled by defining and redefining merit in a manner that justifies discrimination.

Although theirs is a study of gender bias, Uhlmann and Cohen conclude their study by linking it to the research of Gaertner and Dovidio described above, noting (p. 479) that it "dovetails with work on aversive racism in suggesting that prejudice often expresses itself in rationalizable ways . . ." In sum, this body of research demonstrates that discretion in the definition and weighing of evaluative criteria, even

with regard to ostensibly objective criteria, contributes to bias, and it often does so in a way that allows decision makers to justify to themselves and to others that their actions are fair and nondiscriminatory.

Racial bias in performance assessment

There is ample reason to closely scrutinize any performance review system for potential racial bias. A large body of social science research, including many studies conducted in organizational settings, shows that African Americans tend to receive lower performance evaluations than do whites. For example, a 1985 article by Kraiger and Ford performed a meta-analysis of 84 studies with a total of over 20,000 ratees, including 64 field studies and 10 experimental studies of white raters rating a total of 17,159 African American and white ratees (Kraiger and Ford, 1985). Meta-analysis is a method for quantitatively aggregating results across studies in order to obtain a more precise estimate of the size and reliability of effects than can be obtained from any single study (Hunter and Schmidt, 1990). In addition, a meta-analysis of studies conducted across a variety of settings contributes to establishing the external validity of the research. Kraiger and Ford's meta-analysis found that African Americans, on average, received significantly lower evaluations than did whites. They also found evidence suggesting that white raters give significantly higher ratings to whites than do African Americans; and that African American raters give significantly higher ratings to African Americans than do whites.

A subsequent meta-analysis replicates Ford *et al.*'s finding regarding racial differences in performance measures (Martocchio and Whitener, 1992). The Martocchio and Whitener meta-analysis focused specifically on field studies of performance assessment conducted in private sector firms. The results of their analysis of ten field studies also indicated that race effects were larger on subjective than on objective measures of performance. In an article published in 2003, Roth *et al.* replicated Kraiger and Ford's research on a larger sample of studies, and they found that overall, racial differences in performance ratings between African Americans and whites were comparable to those in the 1985 meta-analysis (Roth, Huffcutt, and Bobko, 2003). However, unlike earlier studies, they found that racial disparities on objective assessments could be as large or larger than those for subjective assessments. The Roth *et al.* research is also the first large-scale meta-analysis

of disparities between whites and Hispanics, and they found that Hispanics tend to be rated lower than whites, although the disparities are generally not as large as those between African Americans and whites.

Numerous other studies conducted in organizational settings and published in leading refereed journals report similar findings or racial disparities in performance ratings. For example, Jeffrey Greenhaus and colleagues studied the career experiences of a matched sample of 373 African American and 455 white managers in three companies in the communications, banking, and electronics industry (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley, 1990; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1993). The African American and white managers included in their study were similar in age, organizational tenure, job function, and organizational level. Their 1990 article in the *Academy of Management Journal* reports (p. 79) that supervisors rate the performance and promotion potential of African American managers significantly lower than whites, findings the authors describe as "remarkably consistent with the results of Kraiger and Ford's (1985) meta analysis." Compared to white managers, African American managers scored lower on a scale of "corporate fit," expressing higher levels of isolation and lower levels of acceptance within the organization. African American managers reported lower career satisfaction and were more likely to report that there careers had reached a plateau, compared to white managers with similar performance evaluations. The 1993 article explored the attributions supervisors made about the reasons for the successful performance of African American and white managers. Their findings were consistent with laboratory studies on this topic: compared to white managers, successful performance by African American managers was less likely to be attributed to ability or effort and more likely to be attributed to help from others (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1993, pp. 285–288).[2]

The findings of Greenhaus *et al.* regarding race differences in assessment of promotion potential were replicated in a study by Jacqueline Landau of 682 managerial and professional employees of a Fortune 500 company who had been rated at least "above average" in performance (Landau, 1995). Her study examined the impact of race on

[2] For experimental evidence of race bias in attributions of the causes of successful performance, see Yarkin, Town, and Wallston (1982).

supervisors' assessments of promotion potential as recorded in company records from the annual performance appraisal process. Landau found that African American managers and professionals were rated lower in promotion potential than whites of comparable age, education, organizational tenure, salary grade, job type, and satisfaction with career support.

Other studies and reviews suggest that in many organizational settings, performance reviews by supervisors are not subject to racial bias. For example, in a 1994 review article in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, Frank Landy and colleagues (Landy, Shankster, and Kohler) state (pp. 282–283) that "the field has been moving inexorably toward the final conclusion that *well-developed rating procedures accompanied by training of the raters* will produce ratings that are minimally biased by demographic characteristics of raters or ratees" (emphasis added). In a book published that same year, Latham and Wexley (1994) assert that "*when the appraiser uses behaviorally based appraisal scales*, ratee characteristics, such as age, race, and sex, have a negligible effect on the resulting performance appraisal" (emphasis added). The conclusions of Landy *et al*. and of Latham and Wexley are not inconsistent with the research cited above. It is indeed the case that appropriately designed performance appraisal systems, carefully implemented and monitored, can be free of bias, a topic I return to below.

A recent study argues that the widely-cited article by Sackett and DuBois, sometimes cited as evidence of minimal bias in supervisors' ratings of performance (Sackett and DuBois, 1991), has been misinterpreted by many scholars (Stauffer and Buckley, 2005). The 1991 article has received considerable attention because it is a relatively large-scale study based on supervisor ratings in "real world" settings, both civilian and military. In their reexamination of the results, Stauffer and Buckley note that the findings demonstrate convincingly that African American and white supervisors give similar ratings to white employees, but African American employees receive substantially lower ratings from white supervisors.[3]

[3] The Sackett and DuBois study, based on both civilian and military data, is a "repeated measure" design, where each ratee was rated by multiple supervisors, both white and African American. Since both white and African American supervisors were rating the same individuals, it is possible to isolate the impact of supervisor's race, independent of race differences in the performance of the ratees.

The studies of racial disparities in assessments of performance and promotion potential are consistent with theory and research on in-group favoritism and outgroup bias. In settings where persons of color are a small minority (e.g., less than 15% of those being evaluated), outgroup bias is likely to influence evaluative judgments made by members of the white majority (Dasgupta, 2004; Brewer and Brown, 1998; Jackson, Thoits, and Taylor, 1995; Kramer, 1991). Negative performance by members of the outgroup are attributed to internal dispositions (e.g., a lack of ability or talent), while positive performance is attributed to situational factors such as assistance from others or luck.[4] In organizational settings, members of the minority group tend to receive less desirable job assignments because of low expectations, and they are also likely to receive unreliable and unrealistic feedback about their performance (McGuire, 2002).[5]

Other studies done in workplace settings document the barriers to effective mentorship and support faced by minority employees in predominately white companies. Cox and Nkomo (1991) report analyses of the early career experiences of a sample of 273 African American and 456 white graduates of MBA programs. Most received their degrees from top 20 business schools in the United States. African Americans reported receiving less support from mentors than did whites of comparable age and experience, with comparable performance ratings, and who were working in organizations of similar size. Cox and Nkomo also report evidence of greater isolation among the African American MBAs, who reported lower levels of job involvement and lower career satisfaction than whites. In a related study of graduates of MBA programs, Dreher and Cox (1996) found that compared to whites, African Americans and Hispanics were less likely to establish mentor relationships with white men and that the disparity in mentorship contributed to the racial gap in salaries. Thomas (1990) analyzed the quality of mentorship received by 88 African American and 109 white managers in a large public utility company. He found that compared to cross-race mentorship relationships, same-race relationships provided African American managers with significantly more

[4] For a review of research on this phenomenon, known as the "ultimate attribution error," see M. Hewstone (1990). Also see reviews of outgroup bias by Brewer and Kramer (1985), Messick and Mackie (1989), and Ostrom and Sedikides (1992).

[5] The early experimental and field studies of these phenomena are summarized in Pettigrew and Martin (1987, pp. 55–60).

"psychosocial support," i.e., direction and guidance, affirmation of ideas, role modeling, and mutuality and trust (also see Dreher and Cox, 1996). In a study of white and African American managers in a financial services company, James (2000) found that African Americans were promoted at a slower rate than whites with comparable education and training and that they received less psychosocial support, were more isolated, and benefited less from company training than their white counterparts.

These studies are consistent with the findings of prior research on the experience of African American managers in predominately white organizations. Fernandez's study of 4,202 managers, including over 900 African American managers, employed in ten large companies reports that a majority of African American managers perceive that whites exclude minority managers from informal work groups (Fernandez, 1981). Moreover, over a third of upper-level white male managers agreed with that assessment. Regina Nixon's study of 303 African American managers in middle and upper management in large corporations found that a majority perceive themselves as either alienated from, or marginal to, the formal and informal networks of corporate life (Nixon, 1985a). Nixon also found that a lack of mentorship was one of the most important factors contributing to this perception and to the perception of blocked promotion opportunities (Nixon, 1985a, 1985b). Research on middle managers in a Fortune 500 firm showed that "high potential" minorities tend to have less access to informed and influential others and to be isolated from corporate informal social networks (Ibarra, 1995).

Subtle bias in hiring: Referrals and other informal recruitment methods

A large body of research, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, conducted in a wide range of industries and occupations, shows that referrals, word of mouth, and similar informal recruitment mechanisms perpetuate the existing racial composition of a workforce and creates barriers for African Americans' entry into white-dominated jobs (Hyde, 2006; Mouw, 2002; Moss and Tilley, 2001; Elliott, 2001; Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996; Kirschenman, Moss, and Tilley, 1995; Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Holzer, 1987a; 1987b). For example, in a recent study of labor markets in four large cities,

demographer Mouw (2002) found that the use of employee referrals rather than more formal recruitment methods reduced the probability of African Americans being hired in predominately white companies by 74%. The discriminatory impact of word of mouth and other informal referral methods documented in social science studies is also addressed in publications written by and for human resources professionals who devise and implement hiring and EEO policies (Buhler, 2002; Sims, 2002; Block, 1994; Arvey and Faley, 1992; Martin, 1991; LoPresto, 1986).

Minimizing workplace bias

Organizational policies and practices that create barriers to career advancement for women and minorities, once in place, become institutionalized and rarely change in the absence of any substantial change in a firm's business, technical, or legal environment (Stinchcombe, 1965; Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Baron, 1991; Stainback, Robinson, and Tomaskovic-Devey, 2005).[6] However, discrimination in the workplace is by no means inevitable, and social science research shows what kinds of policies and practices effectively minimize bias.

Research studies show that the effects of stereotypes, in-group favoritism and out-group bias on evaluative judgments such as those involved in recruitment, hiring, job assignment, compensation, promotion, and assessments of skills and qualifications can be minimized when decision-makers know that they will be held accountable for the process and criteria used to make decisions, for the accuracy of the information upon which the decisions are based, and for the consequences their actions have for equal employment opportunity. Converging evidence comes from organizational research done by sociologists and management scholars (Kalev, Dobbin and Kelley, 2006; Konrad and Linnehan, 1995; Schreiber, Price, and Morrison, 1993), experimental and field studies done by social psychologists (Uhlmann and Cohen, 2005; Ford *et al*., 2004; Reskin, 2003; Fiske,

[6] The concept of organizational inertia has been applied in scientific studies conducted in a wide range of industrial settings. For reviews, see Kaplan and Henderson (2005) and Gresov, Haveman, and Oliva (1993). For applications of the concept of inertia to a range of organizational issues, see Roggema and Smith (1983), Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994), Gardenswartz and Rowe (1994), Fairhurst, Green, and Courtright (1995), Doucouliagos (1996), and Ruef (1997).

Lin, and Neuberg, 1999; Nelson, Acker, and Manis, 1996; Eberhardt and Fiske, 1996; Pettigrew and Martin, 1987; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978; Tetlock, 1985; 1992; Tetlock and Kim, 1987), and the lessons learned from research on accountability and bias have been incorporated into "best practices" recommended by human resources professionals (e.g., Aronson, 2002; Gatewood and Field, 2001; Heneman and Judge, 2003; Hubbard 2003).

Formal written policies alone are not sufficient to minimize bias in personnel decisions. Passive organizational approaches to the prevention of harassment and discrimination that rely primarily on posters and policy statements and that take action only after an incident is brought to the attention of management are largely ineffective. A written antidiscrimination policy that is simply reactive and lacks effective accountability is vulnerable to bias against women and minorities. Often, such a system is simply a symbolic exercise in "going through the motions," with little substantive impact on creating organizational policy and practice that is free of bias (Edelman, 1992; Edelman *et al.*, 1991; Edelman, Erlanger, and Lande, 1993; Edelman and Petterson, 1999; Leonard, 1989; Leonard, 1994). Sociologist and legal scholar Lauren Edelman, the leading expert on this topic, summarizes the findings of fifteen years of research on organizational responses to EEO as follows (Edelman, 2005, pp. 345–346):

> Because it is generally the form rather than the substance of compliance that attains an institutionalized status, there is variation in how enthusiastically management, as well as the personnel who staff compliance structures, embraces legal ideals. In some cases, structures have both symbolic and substantive significance – their form signals attention to legal ideals and they operate to enhance the workplace status and conditions of legally protected employees. In other cases, however, the structures fit the law in form but lack substantive effect. Organizations may strategically seek to create compliance structures merely as symbolic gestures by "decoupling" those structures from core organizational activities. Organizations may, for example, create affirmative action officer positions but give the officer little or no autonomy or authority or create grievance procedures that are hard to access and known to provide little relief.[7]

[7] Also see Krawiec (2003), and on the general issue of decoupling of organizational functions, see Orton and Weick (1990).

In designing systems to minimize workplace racial bias and promote diversity, sorting out symbol from substance is a formidable but not impossible task. Drawing on recent work by both social scientists and human resources professionals, it is possible to provide a roadmap for reaching this goal. The specific recommendations for EEO accountability and monitoring advocated in the paragraphs that follow are formulated to address the kind of subtle or "hidden" bias described in the scientific literature summarized above. They are also formulated with the recognition that organizations can and should make symbolic efforts to reassure internal and external constituencies that the policies and practices in place to address EEO and promote diversity are appropriate and legitimate. At the same time, building on the scientific research that helps us understand how EEO efforts can become decoupled from day-to-day human resources decision making, the recommendations have been designed to avoid "going through the motions" and to ensure that the symbol and substance of organizational policy and practice operate together to effectively minimize bias and promote diversity.

The most effective approaches to minimizing bias rely on proactive policies and practices, with adequate monitoring and accountability (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelley, 2006; Reskin, 2003, pp. 12–13; Sturm, 2001; Bielby, 2000). There are four key elements to effective EEO policy. The first, *managerial EEO accountability*, begins with recurring and mandatory training of managers and supervisors regarding their duties and responsibilities relating to equal employment opportunity. Nearly all medium- to large-scale organizations have a written antidiscrimination policy, and many have a written policy stating that implementing the objectives of the Affirmative Action Plan is the responsibility of every employee. However, such policies are merely symbolic unless they also delineate explicit duties and responsibilities relating to equal opportunity in each manager's or supervisor's job description. Effective managerial EEO accountability requires explicit evaluation of managers and supervisors on their contributions to the organization's equal opportunity goals. This evaluation should be incorporated into specific evaluative dimensions in the performance reviews of those employees and tied in a significant way to the supervisor's or manager's compensation (Aronson, 2002; Kennedy, 2000). In short, in the area of EEO as well as other aspects of human resources, "what gets measured gets done" (Giovannini, 2004; Kerr, 1975).

The second, *HR process accountability*, starts with recurring and mandatory training of managers and supervisors regarding their duties and responsibilities as specified in the organization's written policies for making decisions about hiring, job assignment, promotion, compensation, and the like (Aronson, 2002; Bielby, 2000). Key here is the establishment of specific, job-relevant guidelines for the factors and weighting to be used in making these decisions. To assess the effectiveness of training for HR process accountability, the decision-making process for personnel decisions should be audited regularly to ensure that managers and supervisors are carrying out their duties in a manner that is consistent with their training and with the organization's written policies. And again, the compensation of those who make personnel decisions should be linked in a significant way to assessments of their performance in the area of HR processes.

The third element is *organizational EEO assessment*: periodic monitoring and analysis of disparities by race and gender in job assignments, pay, promotion, performance assessment, and turnover as a routine part of an organization's personnel system. Such monitoring assesses whether disparities are greater than what plausibly might be expected based on differences in job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests and other job-related factors that influence an employee's contributions to the organization.[8] While the mere existence of disparities should not be taken as evidence of discriminatory barriers, they are often the most efficient way to identify which aspects of the company's personnel system warrant closer scrutiny (Aronson, 2002; Bielby, 2000; Kennedy, 2000; Stites, 2005; US Department of Labor, 2006).

The fourth is *workplace climate assessment*: systematic analysis of feedback from employees about perceptions of barriers to and opportunities for career advancement. This kind of monitoring of trends in employees' perceptions can be used to identify subtle forms of bias and

[8] Organizations with Affirmative Action Plans usually do something like this under the rubric of "availability and utilization analyses," but often such analyses are generic reports generated by off-the-shelf programs with little real connection to a company's overall personnel system. Effective monitoring is not based on the generic formulae and broad occupational categories typically used in Affirmative Action Plans, but instead relies on actual job transitions and is based on the same information used by those who make decisions about hiring, job assignment, training, performance evaluation, promotion, compensation, and the like.

related problems not immediately apparent from analyses of more objective workforce data. Also part of workplace climate assessment is periodic and systematic monitoring of the organization's complaint and discipline procedures to ensure that they are accessible and responsive, that investigations are thorough and well documented, and that responses are timely and consistent whenever it has been determined that illegal discrimination or harassment has taken place (Oppenheimer, 2004; Buhler, 1999; Relyea, 1999; Kobata, 1995; Gregg, 1992).[9] Such monitoring should include analysis of racial and gender disparities in the rates of complaints, types of complaints, and outcomes of investigations. Aggregate statistical analysis over time is essential, because in individual cases discriminatory treatment is not always perceived as such by the person who alleges that she or he was treated unfairly, and when discrimination is perceived, organizations often redefine the complaint as a personal dispute between an employee and supervisor or as a claim of improper treatment having nothing to do with equal employment opportunity. Thus statistical analysis of complaints and discipline that show a pattern by race or gender can provide an early indication of potential discriminatory barriers that are not apparent in a review of the documentary record of from cases (Lengnick-Hall, 1992; Jossem, 1991).

Implementing the four elements of effective EEO policy requires commitment and leadership from senior management that goes beyond pronouncements and policy statements to include structuring the EEO function to be a tightly-coupled component of the organization's human resources system. Those charged with designing, implementing, and monitoring policy and practice pertaining to decisions about hiring, job assignment, compensation, promotion, and the like must have the authority and resources to deliver on the promise of equal employment opportunity, and their work must flow directly from and feed back into the organization's overall goals and strategy.

[9] Also see resources for human resource professionals at the Society for Human Resource Management's Knowledge Center, including *Sample Human Resource on Investigating Workplace Conduct*, www.shrm.org/hrtools/policies_published/CMS_000550.asp, and *Anti-Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure*, www.shrm.org/hrtools/policies_published/CMS_000534.asp (retrieved February 9, 2006).

Directions for the future: Bringing the firms back in

In 1999, I was asked by the editors of *Contemporary Sociology* to be a contributor for a special issue of "utopian essays" that would explain how sociological research would address important social problems – poverty, residential segregation, interpersonal violence, ethnic conflict, and so on – if only someone would listen to our advice and follow it. My assignment was to write about "how to minimize workplace gender and ethnic bias," and in it I argued that this need not be a utopian project, since we had a good handle on how bias gets created and sustained, and that the same research, "either directly or by implication, indicates the kinds of workplace policies and practices that are likely to minimize bias" (Bielby, 2000, p. 121). The "by implication" part of that statement meant that we often have to draw inferences or "connect the dots" between, for example, what we learn about social cognition from laboratory studies, about the dynamics of tokenism from workplace ethnographies, and about the impact of formalization of human resource practices from organizational surveys. No single study can or should attempt to explore all of these mechanisms relating to subtle bias with a single methodology and set of conceptual tools. In the six years since my essay was published, we've gained considerable new knowledge, which I've cited here (approximately one-third of the works cited in this chapter have been published since 2000), and again, appropriately, it comes from a range of disciplines, using multiple methodologies in a variety of settings.

In recommendations for the future, it is always fashionable to call for more interdisciplinary research that incorporates insights from the theories, concepts, methodologies, and findings of different subfields and disciplines. Such a recommendation would seem to follow naturally here, given the range of scholarship covered in this chapter, from labor economics to organizational sociology to cognitive psychology. However, it is important to acknowledge that social science advances through research programs with theories, methods, and research questions defined by and evaluated within specialized subfields. The important insights about "hidden bias" due to stereotyping, so relevant to contemporary discussions about subtle workplace discrimination, comes out of rigorous and highly technical work in a relatively narrow subfield of cognitive psychology. Many of the contributors to that body of scholarship are much more interested in how the brain functions

than in how workplaces generate or minimize bias, yet the results of their research are undeniably important for the latter issue. Similarly, many of those who developed the important sociological scholarship on organizations' symbolic responses to their EEO environments were motivated primarily by an interest in the normative and mythic dimensions of organizational life, not by an interest in discrimination and diversity. Pairing up cognitive psychologists with institutionalist sociologists in most instances will not lead to a productive collaboration, since it is unlikely that scholars with such disparate approaches to behavioral and social science will find much common ground when it comes to the technical details of developing concepts, models, measures, and methods of analysis.

On the other hand, mutual awareness and dialogue among scholars working in different subfields and disciplines has proven to be very productive in generating practical knowledge about how our research is (and is not) relevant to issues of workplace bias and diversity. Indeed, the explosion of interest among social scientists in how cognitive bias and stereotyping affects workplace discrimination has its genesis in interdisciplinary conferences and forums organized by legal scholars. In the fall of 2003, Joan Williams, at that time on the faculty of American University's Washington College of Law, organized the Cognitive Bias Working Group, which brought together organizational sociologists, cognitive psychologists, legal scholars, and litigators to discuss recent research on cognitive bias and its application to workplace gender discrimination, especially against working mothers and other caregivers. The meetings of the group provided the first in-depth exposure to research on implicit bias for most of the non-psychologists, and their comments assisted the cognitive psychologists in designing studies from within their paradigm to address specifically unconscious bias against caregivers (Williams, 2003). The following year, the American Bar Foundation and Stanford Law School sponsored a three-day conference bringing together sociologists, economists, psychologists, legal scholars, and litigators for research presentations and an exchange of ideas on "legal and social scientific approaches to employment discrimination." Research papers published in the conference volume (Nelson and Neilson, 2005) represent each of the social science traditions discussed in this review. While each contribution is firmly grounded in the author's subfield, they all contribute in significant ways to scholarship on workplace bias. Most recently, the American

Bar Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences have supported meetings of a group of interdisciplinary scholars on the topic of "Social Scientific Perspectives on Employment Discrimination in Organizations" (SSPEDO). The SSPEDO group, coordinated by Lauren Edelman of UC Berkeley's Center for the Study of Law and Society, includes organizational sociologists, cognitive psychologists, management studies scholars, and legal scholars who meet semi-annually to discuss ongoing research projects and to receive feedback on ideas for future research. This kind of focused dialogue among scholars working on a similar topic area but from markedly different research traditions seems to be an extremely effective way of identifying common themes in our work and its implications for workplace discrimination in the "real world." It also nurtures collaboration that develops organically out of an interchange of ideas among scholars with overlapping interests relating to workplace bias, which is most likely more effective than programmatic directives from funding agencies or "calls for future research" in review articles like this one. A reasonable prognosis for the next decade is that disciplinary-based social science research that helps us understand the forces that sustain and minimize subtle workplace bias is likely to continue at an accelerated pace, but with even more awareness among scholars working from different perspectives about both the common and complementary themes in our work and their implication for organizational policy and practice designed to enhance workplace equal employment opportunity and diversity.

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