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Gender and Diversity in Organizations: Past, Present, and Future Directions

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This introduction reviews some of the key issues that have been studied by researchers focused on gender and diversity in organizations. Issues such as discrimination, affirmative action, barriers to career advancement, and sexual harassment at work are discussed. Although the study of gender and diversity in organizations has expanded in the last decade, key areas of research are still underrepresented. Issues for future research in this area are discussed.

OVERVIEW

The issues of gender and diversity in organizations are inextricably linked. Researchers, practitioners, and even laypersons have known for decades that women and racial minorities constitute a growing percentage of the labor force. More importantly, this growth exists at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. That said, however, groups that represent a statistical or social minority, or both continue to face challenges in U.S. organizations. A variety of factors have been shown to influence work-related outcomes for women and people of color, including overall corporate climate, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, occupational segregation, and exclusion from mentoring opportunities. Although issues facing diversity in organizational careers are complex enough to fill several volumes, this

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special issue includes a diverse range of empirical and theoretical work that examines many of the issues facing women, people of color, and yes, even White men, in today's organizations. The goal of this issue is to highlight some of the ways in which the nature of organizations have changed over the past decade and review the unique implications of these changes for the future. In addition, some of the key strategies for enhancing career opportunities for diverse organizations of the future are part of our focus.

EXAMINING THE PAST

One of the most widely studied areas that examines the barriers to women's career advancement are the consequences of discrimination in the workplace. The most well-known illustrations of discrimination in the workplace are captured by the concept of the glass ceiling, which defines the invisible barrier that prevents many women and minorities from advancing into senior and executive management positions within organizations (Hede, 1994; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987). A number of studies have explored discrimination at work across factors such as job type, organization size and composition, and industry and target group involved. A study by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) reported lower representation of women and minorities in occupations with high status, executive level positions, and board of directors. In addition, studies show that women experience barriers at all levels not only at the top (Marlow, Marlow, & Arnold, 1995), and these barriers significantly retard a woman's career advancement and detract from her performance in the profession. Work by a nonprofit organization known as Catalyst has devoted substantial attention to the issue of women's advancement in organizations. Examples of differential treatment within organizations are one of the most widely cited reasons why women fail to advance to levels of authority and visibility within organizations (Catalyst, 1998).

Misconceptions and negative attitudes that have been shown to derail the careers and success of women in the workplace also have a clear and negative impact on members of other racial and ethnic groups. Research shows that women are often segregated in organizations by specialty based on prevailing stereotypes (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 1998). For example, work by Dobbins, Cardy, and Truxillo (1988) identifies discrimination in job assignments that lead to future promotions as the number one barrier for women, particularly African American women in management jobs. The concept of occupational gender segregation (Jacobs, 1989) describes the disproportionate overrepresentation of women and minorities in low-paying, low-status occupations compared to men and nonminorities. Clearly these differences

decrease women and minorities' earnings potential, career mobility, and access to leadership and decision-making positions within organizations (Goldin & Polacheck, 1987). In addition, discrimination by occupational type is more likely to exclude women and minorities from access to informal networks of information and support that can help in career advancement (Reskin & Hartmann, 1986; Roos & Reskin, 1984). Lastly, the disproportionate representation of women and minorities in low-status jobs puts them at greater risk of workplace discrimination, including sexual (and racial) harassment (Bergmann, 1986).

Another area that has received a great deal of attention in work on the glass ceiling focuses on earnings disparities between men and women. Legislation of the 1960s drew considerable attention to discrimination at work as manifested in wage gaps and inequities in incentives and benefits. The notion of comparable worth and pay equity received a great deal of attention during the past two decades (see Corcoran & Duncan, 1979; 1983). Efforts such as "equal pay for equal work" and affirmative action helped reduce some of this well-documented wage gap based on gender (Murrell & Jones, 1996), but the pay for women of color continues to lag behind their White counterparts. Recent attention has focused on why sex discrimination in wages in some occupations and industries continues and the particular issue of wage differences for women in top positions within organizations (e.g., Catalyst, 1998).

One explanation for the persistence of earnings discrimination in earnings that is frequently cited is the existence of what has been labeled as "dual labor markets" (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Morrison, White & Van Velson, 1987). A greater number of men are employed in the primary labor market compared to women. This primary market offers better jobs with higher pay rates. Conversely, the secondary labor market is dominated by women and minorities and contains jobs that are low-paying and low-status. The notion of different labor markets based on demographic factors such as sex and race is quite consistent with the notion of occupational segregation based on sex and race previously discussed. What is key to the notion of the dual labor market is that it represents a structural barrier to women's career advancement that explains why there is relatively little movement between the two markets, especially for women and minorities. This dual labor market for women provides an impermeable barrier for career advancement and is of critical importance in explaining the gender gap in earnings.

A significant area under research within the literature on the glass ceiling, is the intersection of race and gender on career outcomes and advancement (Murrell, 1999). Some writing in this area (e.g., Bell, 1990) focuses on the double disadvantage experienced by minority women in professional

settings. Bell argues that for women of color a push and pull exists between issues of race, ethnicity, and gender that uniquely effects career outcomes. This dual pressure puts this group in the unique position of being both visible and isolated within a traditional male (and White) work environment. In addition, these women are likely to experience job stress, dissatisfaction, and interpersonal conflict resulting from high visibility, performance pressure, and isolation (Essed, 1991).

In her classic work on the effect of tokenism or solo status and gender, Kanter (1977) argued that proportional representation affects the dynamics of social interactions at work. A workplace that is homogenous in terms of master statuses such as sex or race will differ qualitatively from environments that are "skewed" (those with a 15% or less minority) or "balanced" (those with a 40–50% minority). Specifically, she contended that in skewed work environments, token or solo status results in stereotypical assumptions about what those characteristics mean that disadvantage women and minorities in organizations. Kanter (1977) argued that women who enter male-dominated organizations are more visible to others due to their uniqueness, more likely to be viewed as different from the dominant gender group, and more likely to be stereotyped within the workplace. Although Kanter's work was initially focused on female tokens, what we have learned over time is that the experiences and consequences of tokenism hold true whether it is a man or woman, and racial minority or White, in the token position.

Ely (1995) argues that as long as women are underrepresented in positions of power, barriers to advancement for women may persist. Ely (1994) examined women in law firms with either few women in senior positions ("male-dominated" firms) or a significant number of women in senior positions ("sex-integrated" firms). She found that the proportion of women in senior positions shaped both the peer and supervisory relationships women had in the firms. More specifically, she found that early career stage women in male-dominated firms were less likely than those in sex-integrated firms to view senior women as good role models. Ely explained this finding by arguing that in male-dominated firms, junior women perceived that being female was incompatible with power and status within the organization. Junior women in her study would either see senior women as lacking in power and, therefore, not "legitimately senior," or they would see them as having obtained their positions by acting like men rather than women.

Clearly career strategies have changed substantially for women in organizations since the early studies on the glass ceiling. Although organizations attempt to restructure career patterns of their employees, there has also been a corresponding change in individual career attitudes. *Fortune* magazine (Linden, 1992) described college graduates of 1989 as having their eyes on "new realities" in reference to career mobility. Feldman (1981, 1985, 1986,

1988) has described the changing career values and goals that are defined as "the propensity to pursue career advancement through non-performance-based means" (Feldman & Weitz, 1991, p. 238). These non-performance-based means include career mobility tactics (e.g., lateral transfers, downward movements, changing companies) and the instrumental use of social relationships with coworkers, supervisors, or other organizational mentors. Ironically, the careerist attitude is seen as a double-edged sword. When individuals place a great deal of weight on career advancement, the desire for success is often at the expense of both relationships within organizations and with coworkers who resent the instrumental and deceptive relationships maintained by careerists (Feldman & Brett, 1983). The fact that career paths increasingly extend beyond organizational boundaries and span different organizations (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1995) calls for a special consideration of the impact of these "boundaryless careers" and key outcomes and obstacles.

This "new career" reality has unique consequences for the experience of women compared to men in organizations. Research by Murrell, Frieze, and Olson (1996) shows that gender has an important effect on whether career mobility has positive versus negative outcomes on earnings, satisfaction, and breaking through the glass ceiling. Thus, although career mobility factors may enhance flexibility for males, they often involve mobility strategies (interruptions, job changes, part-time work) that may have a negative effect on career outcomes, particularly for women.

Another area of research that has been a traditional focus of scholars in this area is sexual and as a form of gender discrimination. Behaviors such as sexual remarks, sexual coercion, and intimidation are examples of discriminatory acts that comprise the legal definition of harassment. In addition, aspects of the environment that are seen as hostile constitute harassment. Although the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace is not a new issue, the attention focused on defining, prosecuting cases, and preventing harassment has increased substantially over the past decade. Still, a vast number of incidents of gender-based harassment go unreported because victims fear retribution by the perpetrator and by the organization (Gruber, 1992; Lach & Gwartner-Gibbs, 1993).

Attention to the issue of harassment had substantially increased since the influential work by MacKinnon (1979). By 1980, only 15% of workers had not heard of the term sexual harassment (Gutek, 1985). There is some evidence to support the speculation that marginality, or low-status characteristics, increase an individual's vulnerability to harassment. Younger women are more often the targets of harassment (Gutek, 1985; LaFontaine & Tredeau, 1986). Unmarried women are also reported as somewhat more likely than married women to be victims of harassment (Gutek & Bjorn, 1987).

In addition, women who represent a minority within the organization, such as those in nontraditional occupations, are at increased risk of being harassed (Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990). Gruber and Bjorn (1982, 1986) found that Black women autoworkers not only received more harassment than Whites, but these women were also harassed more severely than their White counterparts. These incidents ranged from what these researchers labeled "moderate" harassment (sexual propositions, sexual innuendos) to "severe" harassment (demands for sexual activity, physical assault). Segura (1992) examined Chicanas in white-collar jobs and found evidence for incidents of both sexual harassment and race discrimination. Research that disentangles issues such as gender, race, and class or race and status within the workplace (e.g., low level workers, contigent workers) is clearly needed. In addition, comparing the frequency of sexual harassment for women of color across different occupational levels is necessary in order to confirm that these women, regardless of power or status within the workplace, are more prone to harassment.

Although there is little evidence examining the frequency and severity of harassment among women of color, there has been some research investigating the factors that predict whether women will report incidents of sexual harassment and the impact of sexual harassment on work outcomes for these women. For example, Gutek (1985) found that women who experience sexual harassment at work also experience isolation and lack of access to mentoring and informal networks. Some suggest that these women may limit the nature of their interpersonal contacts at work, in part, because of their fear over exposure to harassment. Women may also be likely to quit their jobs because of harassment and, thus, harassment can derail their career advancement. One theoretical explanation for the impact of sexual harassment on women's careers can be extrapolated by the work of Gutek and her colleagues. Gutek and Morasch (1982) suggested that sex-role spillover occurs when gender roles spill over into the workplace and either replace or compete with work-related roles and expectations. As a consequence of this spillover, experiences with sexual harassment are more likely to occur within environments that are highly sexualized, or when gender roles are highly salient. According to this argument, women in nontraditional, male-dominated occupations and men in nontraditional, female-dominated occupations are more likely to experience sexual overtures at work compared to women and men working in traditional jobs. Gutek, Cohen, and Konrad (1990, p. 101) argue that often "male sexuality becomes incorporated into male-dominated work environments." Such an orientation tends to cause people to respond in stereotypic ways. Young, attractive women may be seen as "sex objects" by their male coworkers rather than as employees, resulting in higher levels of sexual harassment. And, within this type of stereotypic

thinking, once a woman is labeled as "sexual" within a work environment, most of her behavior is perceived within this framework (Gutek, 1985). Thus, it appears that individuals in male-dominated or highly sexualized workplaces are more likely to have highly stereotyped beliefs about the more general roles of women and men. Thus, stereotyped views of males and females, often pervasive in work environments that have a skewed gender ratio (e.g., are male-dominated), serve as a key barrier for women's career outcomes and well-being at work.

A substantial number of scholars who focus on gender and diversity in organizations have examined the issue and impact of affirmative action. Methods for measuring the negative or adverse impact of a variety of different employment practices on employees are a key feature of antidiscrimination policies and programs such as affirmative action (Crosby, 1994). These monitoring systems are usually put in place to either assess progress of some existing antidiscrimination effort or to determine the need for future intervention. Recently, there has been a substantial amount of debate over the need for antidiscrimination programs such as affirmative action (Murrell & Jones, 1996). As Murrell, Dietz-Uhler, et al. (1994) argue, macrolevel initiatives that monitor the progress of women and minorities in organizations are essential for the accurate detection of discrimination in the workplace. However, some critics of antidiscrimination policies such as affirmative action argue that these measures are no longer needed given the gains of women and coupled with claims of "reverse discrimination" (see Murrell & Jones, 1996, for a discussion). In fact, even some women report negative feelings toward affirmative action programs, in large part due to the stigma often associated with the perception of being an "affirmative action hire" (Heilman, Block & Lucas, 1992). Unfortunately, critics of antidiscrimination policies such as affirmative action often base their criticisms on employment practices that generally misinterpret the spirit of affirmative action (e.g., quotas). It may be the case, however, that although affirmative action and similar policies and programs generate some resistance, changes in the nature of the employment relationship and the reduction of stable or full-time work may increase their importance and necessity in the future (Turner & Pratkanis, 1994).

More recently, a great deal of attention has been focused on the area of mentoring and its impact on career outcomes for women and people of color in organizations. Kram's influential work (e.g., Clawson & Kram, 1984; Kram, 1983, 1985) distinguished between the classic mentor relationship and other less involving, exclusive, and intricate types of relationships such as the sponsor relationship and peer support (p. 4). Kram argues that there are two basic types of mentoring functions. The first type tends to be exclusively career-focused and includes a sponsor providing exposure and visibility,

coaching, protection, and challenging assignments to a junior member in the organization. The second type of function, called psychosocial, involves a more senior member of the organization serving as a role model and providing acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Although career functions are closely related to an individuals' advancement in the organization, psychosocial functions are equally as important in that they focus on the enhancement of competence, identity, and personal effectiveness.

Kram proposes that developmental relationships can serve different functions at different stages in the life of a person's career. Scholars have also noted that under some conditions career advantages for a protégé are achieved because a more senior person undertakes key mentoring functions (Ibarra, 1995; James, 2000; Ragins, 1989;). Recent evidence provides support for the positive impact of these developmental relationships. A recent study by Dreher and Cox (1996) showed that women and minority MBAs who had had a mentor earned significantly more money than those who had not had one. Protégés of White male mentors earned $22,454 more than those without formal mentors.

Recently attention has turned to the developmental and relationship aspects of mentoring, particularly as they relate to the protégé's development of status and power within organizations. Research indicates that individuals who receive mentoring report more positional power (Fagenson, 1988; 1989) and receive more promotions and compensation (Dreher & Ash, 1990; James, 2000) than individuals without either formal or informal mentoring relationships. Ragins and her colleague argue that mentoring is also a source of power for mentors. Protégés affect a mentor's status and credibility in the organization and can provide a loyal base of future support and expertise (Ragins & Scandura, 1994). In addition, an individual's experience as a protégé has been found to be a significant predictor in the decision to become a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Clearly individuals see the value in these types of developmental relationships; they are likely to enter the relationship again as a mentor.

Mentoring relationships may take a variety of forms (Kram & Hall, 1996). Key dimensions that have been the focus of previous research include the specific position of the mentor (Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990) and his status within the organization (Fagenson, 1988). Work by Kram and Isabella (1985) showed that mentors who are at higher ranks than protégés differ from mentors who hold lateral or peer positions within the organization. These issues are particularly relevant with respect to gender and race and career outcomes. Because women face greater barriers to mentoring relationships they may be more likely to develop relationships with their immediate supervisor and senior peers (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Minority employees often go outside their department and

their organization to find mentoring (Thomas, 1989, 1990, 1993; Thomas & Higgins, 1996). These types of "external mentors" are an increasing trend in developmental relationships, particularly as organizations and careers become more "boundaryless" (Ragins, 1997). Clearly these various types of mentoring relationships have implications for women and other minorities in organizations who are faced with the glass ceiling and barriers to advancement. Women and minorities in organizations face somewhat of a paradox, they may have a special need for mentoring relationships, but are likely to have limited access to both external and internal mentors (Ragins, 1989).

Recently, Ragins proposed the diversified mentoring construct (Ragins, 1995; 1997) to capture the challenges and advantages of same-gender and cross-gender relationships within organizations. Gender, race, age, career stage, organizational tenure, socioeconomic class, and education may influence mentor functions and protégé outcomes, and they may also vary by the culture and composition of the workplace (Paludi, Meyers, Kindermann, Speicher & Haring-Hidore, 1990; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). For example, Paludi and her colleagues (Paludi et al., 1990) found that gender differences in career stages affect the mentoring relationship. Because of interrupted careers, female protégés are frequently older than their male counterparts and this may impact the ability of the mentor to serve as a role model. Clearly the gender composition of the mentoring relationship affects not only mentoring functions but also career outcomes that are promising, yet offer many challenges as well.

FOCUSING ON THE PRESENT

We are pleased to report that the papers in this special issue of Sex Roles not only address many of the topics just described, but do so from multiple levels of analysis. These levels range from macrocultural issues such as Davidson's work on conflict resolution across racial cultures; to organizational considerations, including the work by Wooten on organizational cultures of female friendly professional service firms, and the Young and James' paper on male tokenism; to more microconcerns, including Chrobot-Mason and DiClementi's paper on managing one's sexual identity in the workplace. Although all of the papers are unique, they each contribute important insights that will contribute to our understanding of race and gender in the workplace. By means of introduction, we offer brief comment on each of the papers in this issue.

Conflict in the workplace is virtually unavoidable, and although there is an extensive body of research on the topic, precious little has been devoted to understanding the differences, or similarities for that matter, regarding how

groups that represent different racial cultures reconcile conflict. Davidson's work begins to fill this gap in the literature. Using two laboratory studies, Davidson first establishes that there are different cultural responses to conflict between Blacks and Whites. Even more valuable, however, is his attempt to understand why those differences exist. Davidson cleverly uses attribution theory (Ross, 1977) to provide a theoretical underpinning regarding why Blacks tend to be more emotionally expressive in their response to conflict than their White counterparts.

Focusing more on organizational culture rather than racial/ethnic culture, Wooten's paper uses Oliver's five predictors of institutional behavior to provide a framework for understanding why public accounting firms tend to adopt women-friendly human resource management policies (Oliver, 1991). Among other things, her study shows that public accounting firms (1) experience workforce diversity initiatives as a catalyst for social obligations to women-friendly policies; (2) conform to pressure from stakeholders (clients and governing bodies) encouraging the adoption of women-friendly policies; and (3) experience competition for labor and therefore adopt policies that would make them an attractive employer to all possible candidates for employment.

Continuing with the focus on organizational context, Young and James studied how a firm's demographic profile might influence one's attitudes and behaviors toward the organization. More specifically, they studied the effects of token status in an organization. What makes this study different from how one might usually think of tokenism is that their minority group was White men, male flight attendants to be precise. Using survey data they found that the relationship between male token status and organizational commitment, intent to quit, and job satisfaction was a function of the male tokens' self-esteem, experience of role ambiguity, and job fit.

Chrobot-Mason and DiClementi bring us back to micro and psychological issues associated with gender and diversity in the workplace. In particular, they examine the antecedents and consequences associated with various strategies gay and lesbian employees use to reveal their minority status at work. We are particularly pleased to include this research into the special issue because although diversity issues around race and gender have made their way into "mainstream" scholarly literature, research on gay and lesbian issues are still relatively new.

SETTING AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

This paper reviews some of the opportunities and barriers facing women and people of color within organizations of the past, present, and the future.

Scholars in the area of gender and diversity in organizations have focused considerable attention on key issues such as the "glass ceiling," discrimination, sexual harassment, affirmative action, mentoring, job interruptions, career mobility, part-time work, and leaves of absence. Contributors to this special issue represent a range of the empirical and theoretical work in this area as well as some emerging topics. Although it is clear that there have been a number of advancements for women and people of color in organizations, considerable barriers remain. Thus, the need for future research on gender and diversity in organizations remains significant.

Clearly one focus of future research efforts should be toward defining systems and structures that are effective in advancing positive outcomes for women and people of color in organization. In addition, more attention should be paid on the impact of legislative efforts toward a more inclusive workplace, especially within the global business environment. Third, more longitudinal studies that track the impact of social, economic, and managerial factors on outcomes for women and people of color are needed. These types of studies are essential in separating sustainable diversity in organizations from one-shot program interventions.

In addition, a number of authors within this special issue caution scholars within the area of gender and diversity in organizations on their choice of conceptual models and methodological approaches. Smith, DiTomaso, Farris, and Cordero argue that scholars should not lump "women and minorities" together as a standard approach to research and also caution against aggregating all "Whites" together in future studies. In their work, issues such as favoritism and bias in performance ratings were significantly effected by the relative number, power, and status of these various groups within the organization. These authors argue that findings such as this are often masked because researchers often do not attend factors such as proportional representation within the workplace or within their own research samples. Goldberg's research included in this issue makes a similar argument through findings within the context of sexual harassment. Her work reveals that women's responses to negative events such as sexual harassment at work are, indeed, impacted by the gender proportions within their specific workgroup. The representation of women and people of color within the workplace also impacts ubiquitous phenomenon such as organizational commitment, as the research by David Porter demonstrates. His work shows that conceptions and attributions of behaviors that demonstrate commitment to the organization are "gendered" constructs that have important consequences for women's progress within the organization. Thus, the proportional representation of women and people of color within organizations and research samples are topics that should receive more attention in future research.

In addition to microissues for future work in the area of gender and diversity in organizations, two papers within this special volume cite macrolevel issue for future study. Work by Bajdo and Dickson reinforces this point through data showing that organizational cultures that are supportive of gender equity are more likely to achieve higher proportions of women in managerial positions than organizations lacking this emphasis. Alison Konrad and her colleagues provide data on the impact of identity and support of macrolevel policies and programs for affirmative action within the workplace. Her findings suggest that differences in worldview between women and men pose a threat to the success of antidiscrimination efforts such as affirmative action. Lastly, research by Ebrahimi, Young and Luk reminds us that gender and diversity within organizations is not strictly a U.S. phenomenon. Their paper reviews work on management and gender within an international context and reminds us that organizational effectiveness and diversity must be examined within the global context of the workplace. Thus, future research must not only focus on microlevel issues facing a diverse workforce, but macrolevel issues impacting organizational policies and programs within a global work environment.

Clearly each of the papers within this special issue raise important concerns that should be addressed by future work in this area. The hope of the authors who have contributed their work to this project and the editors who have organized these efforts is that the issues raised herein will not only stimulate additional working in the area of gender and diversity in organizations, but will also uncover new solutions to the barriers and challenges facing women and people of color within a rapidly changing, global workplace.

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