

WHEN TACIT ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS ARE BARRIERS TO AFRICAN AMERICANS FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP: START HERE!

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ABSTRACT

In the face of legal requirements to control discrimination and financial outputs that indicate increased productivity and revenues from diverse work forces, all while providing satisfactory outcomes for all stakeholders, today's organizations face incessant pressure to diversify the work force at all levels. As a response to these heightened expectations, virtually all contemporary organizations employ some form of diversity planning. However, change at the top of organizations has been slow, and change at lower levels of organizations has been inconsistent, thereby resulting in too few African Americans being promoted into executive positions, an indicator of stalled socioeconomic status for African Americans. That is, organizations, on average, are capping upward mobility for African Americans through a variety of behaviors.

While much continues to be made about the importance of a diverse work force, the numbers of African Americans in executive positions continues to be disproportionately low. This paper reviews the research literature which articulates the tacit organizational factors that contribute to low representation of African Americans in executive positions, because organizations are powerful purveyors of change. This complex snapshot of the variable factors, all under the control of the organization, contribute to low representation of African Americans in executive positions. A cultural assessment it is recommended as a first step to assist in identifying potential tacit organizational barriers.

Keywords: Race, Executive, Diversity, African American, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

I think that there are all kinds of presumptions that we make about each other based on race. I think that there is still a very tragic sense of who is better, and who is not, that is heavily influenced by race. I think we have a lot of doubts, a lot of distrust, and a lot fear that is organized primarily around race, and until we deal with it, it will just grow.... We don't like talking about race, and that's as true today as it was 40 years ago as it was 80 years ago.

Brian Stevenson, Founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative
Montgomery, Alabama. From *Mobile in Black and White* (Lewis, 2014)

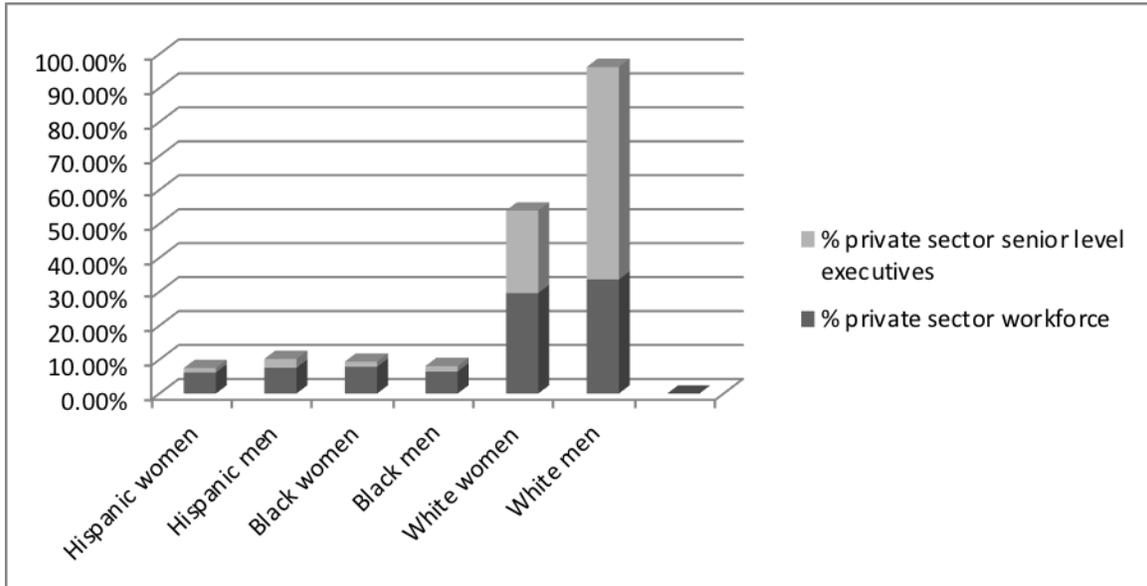
In the past 50 years, a change in the opportunities available to minority groups occurred in the United States, due to the promulgation of anti-discrimination laws in the 1960s and 1970s (Hewlett, Luce, & West, 2005; Robert, 2010). During the past two decades, global talent shifts

have also occurred that allowed more people from minority groups to participate in executive and political leadership (Hewlett et al., 2005). Despite these events, the representation of African Americans in executive leadership across all disciplines is extremely low (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gurchiek, 2017; Guynn, 2016; Hewlett et al., 2005). Evidence from research and professional organizations indicates that African Americans are not being promoted nor do they advance at a rate that is commensurate with their representation within the workforce or general population. Few make it to executive leadership positions (Gurchiek, 2017), particularly in the higher paying fields of general business, management, and finance. In the United States, African Americans continue to experience barriers to advancement and self-actualization associated with race. This outcome flies in the face of the enactment of laws, e.g. the Civil Rights Acts of 1866, 1871, 1957, 1964, 1968, and 1991, Fair Employment Act of 1941, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, all of which specifically address issues of discrimination toward resolving employment challenges (Robert, 2010).

Nonetheless, for African Americans, the challenge associated with being black in America is even more glaring when one looks at the upper echelons of organizations. Executive positions are rare for African Americans. Gurchiek (2017) notes that there have been only 15 African American CEOs in the history of the Fortune 500, with only three, or less than 1%, currently serving as CEO of a Fortune 500 company (McGirt, 2018). No minorities were ever served as a CEO of a Fortune 500 company before 1998, when Franklin Baines was selected to lead Fannie Mae. (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999) Further, there is little chance that a person of color will retain such a position – the odds are 33-1, when compared to retention of Whites (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). Similarly, executive team positions are rare for African Americans. In Fortune 100 companies, black men and women make up only 4.7% of executive team members, a share that has remained the same since the inception of the survey in 2011 (McGirt, 2016). At the same time, the American labor force includes 159.2 million, or 12%, African Americans as a subset in the work force, an approximately equitable representation of the overall population which is 13.4% African American (United States Census Bureau, 2018). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that this will increase to 169.7 million, or 12.7%, by 2026. This suggests that African Americans are close to reaching race parity for representation within the general labor force as percentage of the population. Nonetheless, African Americans hold only 6.7% of the 16.2 million management jobs in smaller U.S. companies, although they comprise twice that share of the nation's population (McGirt, 2016).

One U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2011) survey found that African Americans constitute 2.8% of CEOs, a number that is the lowest among the major ethnic groups in the country (Caucasian, Asian, African American, and Hispanic). African Americans occupy only 10% of business, management, and financial occupations, and hit their glass ceilings at around the mid-management level. By contrast, whites, predominantly men, hold 93% of CEO positions, a share that is 20% greater than white percentage within the general labor force (James, 2017). Figure 2 indicates the wide disparity in senior/executive level positions by race.

Figure 1. Racial Representation of Workforce and Senior Executives in Business. Adapted from American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2016.



LITERATURE REVIEW

The modern business environment is shaped by dynamic forces including global talent shifts, human rights, technology, governance, legislative advancements, and diversity. Understanding the factors that influence the attainment of executive leadership positions by African Americans is imperative, particularly, because present day business contexts seek diverse responses to complex problems. Toward providing a well-developed foundation for 1) realizing truthful discussion about race in organizations and 2) the organizational role in lack of representation for African Americans at executive levels, this literature review focuses on tacit factors that are under organizational control.

Diversity management is a difficult and complex effort that challenges organizational professionals every day. Factors that influence and create the complexity are discussed within this literature review with the acknowledgment that some of these challenges have been addressed to some extent, but none have been effectively mastered. These factors are tacit, and therefore, have been overlooked or are not fully understood by all organizational members. This creates significant concerns in the workplace, because workplace diversity is increasing. Moreover, this serves to perpetuate workplace inequalities.

Kanter (1977) posited that observed differences in the behaviors of men and women in the context of organizations arose from organizational structure and social circumstances rather than attitudes. She believed that productivity, motivation, and career success were predetermined by the situations handed to employees (Barnett, 1987).

Thus, observed differences in the behavior – and the success - of men and women had more to do with what they were handed by the organization than with inherent differences in

ability or drive. When men and women were dealt similar cards and given similar places in the corporate game, they behaved in similar ways. The problem, though, was that men and women rarely were dealt similar cards....instead of blaming individuals for poor attitudes, I proposed we fix organizations. (Kanter, 1987 as interviewed by Barnett, 1987, p. 257-8)

Industry responded to her perspective by improving participative management and employee involvement as part of operating practices. Within 10 years, Kanter reported notable improvements for women. These authors have used Kanter's (1977) perspective to inform an approach to the current problem of too few African Americans in executive positions. Deming (2000) also emphasized that the problems lie with organizations, not the employees. Rather than concentrating on ways to improve diversity participation and activities, these authors focus on organizational factors that are tacit and not always understood by organizational leaders/decision makers, because these factors obscure the true picture of workplace inequalities. The key areas of literature presented include intersectionality, organizational culture, information access, and homosocial reproduction. These are the areas where organizations can be "fixed" toward providing greater opportunities to achieve equality.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw, as cited in Corlett & Mavin (2013) crafted the original definition of intersectionality to address African American women's unique needs and to propose activist practices and policy changes. Intersectionality is overlapping of inequalities which produce a distinctive social category that is more than the sum of adding single categories, and thus creates unique *disadvantages*. Intersectionality is presented as a theory of gender and social identities to explore multiple and intertwined identities that have developed within a socio-cultural power framework. When examined at the individual level of experience (micro), these interlocking identities create inequality at the social level (macro). However, gender and social identities are continuously shifting, complicated, and can be contradictory (Corlett & Mavin, 2013); as a result, no single experience provides only privilege or only oppression. Kang, Callahan, and Anne (2015) indicate that gender and ethnicity issues, the foundations of intersectionality, are underrepresented within the body of work that includes organizational study and policies. Nonetheless, gender and race intersectionality is important to understand for its contribution to an individual's economic stability as well as self-esteem because there is a direct impact on career development needs.

Wingfield (2013) addresses intersectionality, specifically, as she investigates the impact of both race and gender for black men at work. For example, African American men may have a distinct advantage solely, because they are men, while simultaneously experiencing a disadvantage for being African American. Wingfield (2013) posits that tokenization may be mitigated by the interaction of race and gender for men. She did not find this to be true for women.

As cited by Wingfield (2013), Williams (1995) suggests that men may experience a "glass escalator" when employed in woman-dominated fields while women continue to suffer a "glass ceiling" when employed in male-dominated fields, even when the employee is a token. Woodhams, Lupton, and Cowling (2015) corroborate this point when they found that ethnic men and men with disabilities are less likely to be advantaged by the glass escalator, clearly indicating

that being male was less advantageous when the employee is African American or disabled. They also found that ethnic men are more likely to be found at low level work and part-time work. Not surprisingly, they found that white men and men without disabilities were more likely to be advantaged over all other employees by the glass escalator effect. Similarly, Davis (2012) conducted a phenomenological study on leadership development of African American women executives in academia and business. The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of gender and race for this group as they developed into leaders. The study found women's leadership development is grounded in family traditions. The women referred constantly to the guidance and support provided by family. Their leadership personalities and leadership identities developed in the family setting. Women maintained confidence in their identities even while interacting with dominant culture organizations, even though the women believed they received differential treatment based on their gender and race.

Bell and Nkomo (2001), as cited by Wingfield (2013) and Powell (2018), note the unique disadvantages suffered by African American women as compared to White women. African American women had fewer resources, e.g. network contacts, felt greater pressure to perform than their White colleagues, and were less likely to have African American role models, all while facing substantial barriers to advancement. The women believed they were stereotyped as “incompetent and unqualified.” Although African American men have also been labeled as incompetent, overall, the men have, nonetheless, achieved more promotions to higher management.

Anestaki, Sabharwal, Connelly, and Cayer (2016) corroborate these earlier study findings by investigating the impact of intersectionality across United States Presidential administrations. Notably, the administration of George W. Bush appointed the highest numbers of male White appointees of the administrations covering the years of 1993-2013. During these years, President Clinton was most likely to appoint African Americans while President Obama was more likely to appoint Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. President Clinton was the most likely to promote African American women during these years, showing a statistically significant likelihood of choosing African American women over President Obama. For General Service (GS) positions, President Bush was more likely to appoint Hispanic men than Presidents Clinton and Obama. Overall, women showed an upward trend across all administrations, but these authors reinforce that males and Whites continued to be overrepresented through 2013.

Finally, Livingston, Rosette, and Washington (2012) highlight the importance of understanding the impact of intersectionality with their investigation into race and gender bias as it applies to sanctions that result from race and gender of executive leaders. This study found that Caucasian women and African American men were more likely to experience sanctions for agentic behaviors, e.g. dominance, anger, self-promotion, and assertiveness. Livingston et al. (2012) did not find evidence of sanctions toward African American women who displayed agentic behaviors. This enigmatic finding indicated that African American women received the same outcomes as White males. These authors posit that there are differing penalties for dominance rather than competence related mistakes, and African American women are less likely to be seen as a threat to status and less relevant to power struggles.

Taken together, these studies on intersectionality indicate the complexity of dealing with gender and race bias, particularly as it impacts decision making of organizational leaders. While

Livingston et al. (2012) discovered a window of opportunity that may create advantage for African American women, other authors did not indicate such an advantage, likely because studies have been focused on the impact of gender from the perspective of being White. That is, the predponderance of subjects in gender studies have been white, a gap which Livingston et al. (2012) sought to address through cross race comparisons.

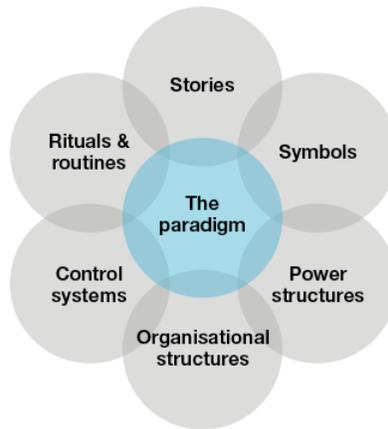
Organizational Culture

Shein (1984) explains the three levels of organizational culture to include 1) basic assumptions (“taken for granted, invisible, preconscious” (p. 4)), 2) values, and 3) symbols that may be visible, but indecipherable. As stereotyping and perceptions arise from organizational experiences, this can represent, at least in part, a source of perceptions for social inequality. Social inequality impacts the organizational experience of individuals as well as outcomes. For example, this is where discrimination is experienced, defined as denying or limiting potential opportunity for employment based on a relationship to characteristics of a protected class of individuals (Walsh, 2007; as cited in Smith and Joseph, 2010). These could include, but are not limited to, racial, gender and sexual harassment. Although discriminatory practices may not be intentional or based on the white male against females or minorities model, these are often stereotyped views which are enacted through discriminatory practices because of unrecognized employer biases. Pay disparities and exclusion from different networks have also been noted, potentially, as unrecognized biases.

Smith and Joseph (2010) identified five different themes from their research that may be consider “unrecognized” by organizational members, including organizational culture, discrimination and stereotyping, human capital investment, Eurocentric worldview and dual status, and partial inclusion (p. 751). Organizational culture is perceived as the greatest impact on an individual’s experiences and outcomes, based on standard practices and policies, and to whom advantages are given, even though the legal requirements for diversity appear to have no influence on organizational norms. Organizational practices may be so deeply embedded that members of the organization are not conscious of how these may create a discriminatory environment.

Johnson (2000) discusses the cultural web as a model to address a broader way to approach the multiple interdependencies of culture. As in Schein (1984), there is an underlying assumption that basic heuristics are shared within group. This model is presented as a Venn diagram of seven circles with each circle representing a different dimension of organizational culture. The dimensions are paradigm, symbols, power structures, organizational structures, control system, rituals and routines, and stories. Paradigm, found in the middle, provides the anchor for the model, through which all other dimensions connect and influence culture. He argues that a benefit of the web approach is concensus-building, finding a “collective mind.” that results from discussions about the nature of each dimension.

Figure 2. The Cultural Web (Johnson, 2000).



These approaches are only three of the many approaches that can be found in the literature as frameworks for assessing organizational culture; however, many graduate business students are not familiar with implementing such frameworks. Conversely, universities and organizations approach culture through theory rather than application, thus leaving the work of analysis without an appropriate foundation. Later, we will provide a simple tool to help organizations tackle the project of analyzing internal culture.

Information Access

Sturm (2009) proposes that workplaces do not consistently or systematically provide the most important information necessary to obtain access to opportunities or to obtain the resources necessary to support these opportunities, advancement and recognition, because much of this is tacit knowledge. Sturm (2009) reminds us that research has documented the existence of “implicit cognitive frameworks” (p. 95), and that these frameworks, used to inform or evaluate people of color, exist as another dimension of inequality. Disadvantages may also exist in the ground rules, both procedural and substantial, which are embedded with assumptions and may date back to when ground rules were established that did not include minorities. Because these ground rules have been in place for some time, decisions that result from these ground rules are continuously reflected in the accumulation of decisions that now may be perceived as inequitable. These “systemically rooted disparities” (Sturm, 2009, p. 96) exist in ground rules and networks, information, and other organizational paradigms. Sturm (2009) refers to these as second-generation dynamics.

Homo Social Reproduction

Homosocial reproduction is described as similar superiors who have access to power positions beneath them (Elliott and Smith, 2004). Homo social reproduction is common among all ethnic and gender groups; however, these groups do not have sufficient opportunity in the work place, outside of white males, to engage in these practices with frequency. This study indicates that men and women of various ethnicities do experience inequality in workplace power relative to white men, and they experience it by different mechanisms and to differing degrees. This may be due to underdeveloped human capital. For example, Elliott and Smith (2004) found that African American men were only about half as likely to be managers/supervisors as white men. When they

added a more rigorous test to include total years employed, job experience, education, and employer tenure (human capital factors), they could only explain inequalities for Latinos and white women; conversely, the added controls did not explain inequalities for Latinas, African American men or African American women. Finally, after adding more controls through employment context factors, they could explain inequalities for African American men and Latinas, but not for African American women.

White women fare worse under white male supervision while African American women are most likely to rely on networking to attain positions of power. However, because white males have more opportunities to engage in homo social reproduction, patterns must be examined to determine the extent of the impact across jobs and establishments relative to segregation and, possibly, discrimination. Ultimately, homo social reproduction occurs in all types of groups. The difference is that white males have more opportunities to engage in this set of behaviors, as reflected by lower numbers of African Americans in management and leadership positions. Elliott and Smith (2004) also consider inequalities in workplace power and note that most literature focuses on gender or race, but not on both. The glass ceiling concept introduced an invisible barrier beyond which African Americans attained very modest power and position. Contrary to many opinions, Elliott and Smith (2004) also posit that the control of white men over workplaces in the US is not absolute, and research has never provided empirical evidence of tendencies for homo social reproduction across various groups; as a consequence it remains unclear if white men, as opposed to African Americans, are more likely to engage in supporting others once they rise to power. African Americans can either advance under white men or under similar others. With these situations in mind, it's no surprise that with few "similar others", there are fewer opportunities for African Americans. African American women typically rely on African American men to assist them in attaining management positions. Frequently the men are friends or relatives and work for the same employer (Elliott & Smith, 2004).

Discrimination. Discrimination is one means of creating homo social reproduction. Discrimination is defined as unequal access such as being prevented from entering a job or unequal treatment that often means fewer rewards or opportunities. Those accustomed to receiving access and equal treatment may not even realize how others may be denied the same. Discrimination has been defined by the legal system. The United States Supreme Court recognizes three types of lawsuits related to employment discrimination based on Title VII law. The first of these is disparate treatment where "equals are treated unequally or unequals are treated equally" (Sobol & Ellard, 1988, 383; Roberts, 2010). The second of these theories of discrimination as foundation for legal action is challenges to processes that perpetuate past discrimination. The third of these theories is adverse impact, whereby policies or processes that are not business necessity impact one group more harshly than another (Sobol & Ellard, 1988). This theory of discrimination was initially called "disparate impact" as described in *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424, 431-2 (1971).

Adverse impact cases are heavily reliant on statistics to make the prima facie case for discrimination, because the court is not looking for discriminatory motivation; instead, the court requires evidence of truly disparate effects. One legally sanctioned approach to assessing adverse impact is the "4/5 rule" which provides a means for employers to assess their compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. This theory of discrimination is particularly germane to this

literature review, because statistics cited throughout the paper indicate adverse impact on African Americans. Regrettably, the courts have been slow to press for stronger enforcement of laws.

Color-based discriminatory behaviors are a prevailing obstacle to substantive diversity and account for a significant financial burden to organizations that continue to participate in discriminatory behaviors. Failure to comply with the law can be extremely costly not only for individuals and companies but also society overall. In the years 2008-2017, monetary benefits on color-based discrimination cost \$111,800,000 *before* litigation (EEOC, 2018). Kanter (1987) believes that choosing safety/comfort is a defense against a hyperturbulent environment (Barnett, 1987).

...the turbulence and turmoil in the corporate world today, from heightened international competitiveness and survival concerns to mer mania, create another set of obstacles. With greater perceived risk inherent in business activities, there is an accompanying tendency to make “safer” choices of people – to pick the known over the unknown...And, as external change increases, companies prefer to stay with familiar types of people – despite the obvious need for internal change. (Kanter, interview with Barnett, 1987, p. 263)

Covering/Code switching. For many African Americans, the corporate experience is quite challenging. Most African Americans, and indeed most minority professionals, cover up their outside lives and stay “below the radar” to avoid offending the dominant culture. Behaviors that are common include changing hairstyles through chemical alternation or other substantive means, altering skin tone where possible, falsifying ethnicity, changing clothing styles and colors, and controlling spoken language, e.g. speaking a non-English language with others at work. This identity management behavior, called *covering*, results in many African Americans feeling disenfranchised, because they are working within tight social and psychological constraints (Brown, 2016).

Such behaviors cause strife within, as well as between, racial groups. Many African Americans feel compelled to comply with the style of the dominant culture in terms of speaking, appearance, and gestures, in order to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes. Failure to do so can cost one a job or, at least, a recommendation from a judge to get a larger hairpiece (Banks, 2002), an indignity that is unlikely to happen to whites or other minorities. Banks (2002) cites several court cases that have been decided about the way African American women can appear at work from such notable companies as Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Rockettes dance team, the Internal Revenue Service, and American Airlines. In *Rogers v. American Airlines, Incorporated*, 527 F. Supp. 229 (S.D.N.Y. 1981), the judge suggested that Rogers simply wear a larger hairpiece that fit within the conservative guidelines of the company instead of her braided hair. This court decision seriously limits the ways African American women can wear their natural, chemically unaltered hair. Banks (2002) points out that these issues came to the forefront when the African American women were required to work with customers on the front lines of the organization.

Similarly, Powell (2018) argues that as recently as 2016, the courts have reinforced the continued practice of micromanaging African American women in the workplace. Powell speaks directly to the history of controlling African American grooming after providing a succinct history of women’s hair.

The simple truth is that Black women have been straightening their hair for the last 150 years because it was and has continued to be a necessity for survival in the American economy. The quest for "good hair" has been so visceral that today it is a multi-billion-dollar industry. To illustrate, at the turn of the twentieth century, the first female millionaire in the United States made her fortune from the Black hair industry in products designed to straighten the texture of Black hair. (p. 942-943)

In the business sector, 34% of African American women believe appearance rather than ability/potential of the worker plays a stronger role in the promotion process within their organizations. Almost one-fifth of African American women perceive hidden biases to be severe enough to serve as a reason to quit their professional jobs (Hewlett et al., 2005). This belief among African American professionals, that it is necessary to cloak their real identities, and the fact that it is indeed a necessity if they are to last in their jobs, is not only psychologically debilitating, it is also emotionally exhausting, and it speaks against the core of human existence (Hewlett et al., 2005). However, assimilation into the dominant culture is one measure of readiness for upward mobility; as a consequence, assimilation is likely mandatory, (Brown, 2016) and such assimilation requires covering for many.

Unconscious/Implicit Bias. Fundamental attribution error, also called ascertainment bias (Smith, 2005), occurs when the cause of behavior is incorrectly attributed based on beliefs/expectations of the individual making the attribution. "Unconscious bias" has been popularized as the lay language to denote fundamental attribution error. In a decision authored by U. S. Supreme Court Judge Anthony Kennedy, the Supreme Court acknowledges disparate impact as the "unconscious prejudices and disguised animus that escape easy classification as disparate treatment." (Psychological Science, 2015)

Grausz and Mahesri (2018) report the story of an African American woman who was making copies in a print room when she was asked repeatedly for help with office supplies. The underlying supposition was that she must be one of the office supply stockers, because the team of stockers was composed of African Americans. The woman reported being shocked and not being able to respond. She reported being "shook."

Merluzzie and Sterling (2016) found corroborating evidence for the impact of unconscious bias. While studying network-based hiring, they found referrals from others were positively associated with promotions for African Americans. In this study, all interviewees had identical resumes. In Merluzzie and Sterling's (2016) words, "...blacks hired through a referral have similar promotion outcomes to whites hired without referrals" (p.117). The mitigating impact of referrals indicates the need for additional information provided by African Americans that is not required for whites, another indicator of unconscious bias.

Another study by Bertrand and Mullainathan (2003) found notable bias based on names on resumes. By using names that were recognized as uniquely African American and names that were uniquely White, they distributed resumes and counted the number of call backs. After collecting ads for positions from a variety of sources, resumes were matched with employer needs and requirements and submitted. Call back numbers were identical for each race/sex/city/resume quality cell, so call backs were accurately tracked. They found that Whites need to send 10 resumes

to receive a call back while African Americans need to send 15 resumes to receive a call back. They calculated a 50% higher difference in call back rates that they attributed to name manipulation.

Finally, Brown (2016) argues that unconscious bias is central to understanding diversity needs. She acknowledges that unconscious bias is hard wired into each of us, and that it is one reason why it is so difficult to change. It feels “right”, because we have relied on a set of assumptions and patterns for so long. Even if our perception of those assumptions and patterns is faulty, we continue to rely on them, thus driving errors in decision making. Taken together, these studies help to explicate the impact on African Americans of unconscious/implicit bias. Without any intention to discriminate or disadvantage, organizations have been shown to recurrently make decisions that are biased against African Americans.

DISCUSSION

A recurring theme throughout this research literature is the presence of factors over which African Americans, as individuals, have little/no control. All the factors discussed here fall under the control of the organization with respect to bringing about change. Further, because these factors are tacit, they are subtle, and there is no expectation that organizational leaders as well as organizational members fully understand the impact these factors exert with respect to improving diversity management. A consequence of the existence of these tacit factors is the preponderance of responsibility for change rests on organizations, rather than individuals, to drive changes to remove barriers to upward mobility for African Americans. Until organizational leaders engage in intentional behavior toward changing the impact of these barriers, there is little likelihood that African Americans will achieve position parity in executive positions (Thomas, 1992; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999).

Too often, members of organizations explain why certain behaviors persist as “the way we’ve always done it here”, which demonstrates that individuals, rather than organizations, are the focus of organizational change initiatives. This perspective, that this is “the way we’ve always done it here” assumes that all organizational members are knowledgeable about the way things are working on both a formal and informal level and that they “should know” how the organization operates, even if that information is not part of training or organizational socialization. This naïve approach to information dissemination and application overlooks the very foundations of diversity within organizations. Nyak (2015) sees this as a wisdom deficit in leadership. Falkheimer, Heide, Simmonsson, Zerfass, and Verhoeven (2015) explain this as the difference between doing the right things, or doing things right. Organizations may refer to efforts resulting in little change as ‘window dressing’.

START HERE! RESOLUTIONS

A resolution is a firm decision to do something. No diversity management program can succeed without a resolute approach. To guide such an approach, we provide the following resolutions, all of which must be included as part of the diversity management program to reduce barriers to African Americans. This literature indicates that top down and intentional organizational change is a more realistic approach to diversity management than affirmative action. Effective

organizations have executive support and participation throughout analysis, strategy creation, implementation, and evaluation of any diversity initiative. We see an example of this from Thomas and Gabarro (1999) as they tell the story of customers refusing to meet with African American representatives. Executive support allowed those customers two choices: 1) Work with the African American representative of the company or 2) Look for another supplier. Such top down support is imperative for real change to take place and for organizations to meet not only the letter of the law but also the intent of the law.

Resolution 1: Executive officers will take an active role.

Smith and Joseph (2010) identified several implications relative to diversity management. For example, in their research white males were not aware of how race and gender factor into everyday work. Because of such differences, organizations must address the variances within data when developing and implementing diversity efforts rather than simply calling for “more of the same” approaches to diversity education. This approach assumes that organizations are collecting diversity data from all development efforts. Thomas and Gabarro (1999) documented monitoring programs. They presented multiple cases from each company that demonstrated how the most effective programs used story telling and data to document their progress.

Resolution 2: Data will be systematically collected, monitored, and used to bring about change in policy and practice. To discover if variance, systemically rooted disparities, (Sturm, 2009) can influence policy and practice, organizations must be prepared to honestly answer the following questions: “1) Where are the barriers to participation? 2) Why do they exist? 3) Are these signals of broader problems or issues, how can they be addressed, where are the openings or pivot points that could increase participation....?” (Sturm, 2009, p. 97). Sturm (2009) proposed research and teaching collaborations in an academic setting which could be reinterpreted as collaborations/teamwork in organizations to help enhance the value of social capital, the loss of which is the result of discrimination, poor inclusion, and other tacit factors investigated here, of marginalized organizational members. Sturm (2009) also proposed a way to address the second-generation dynamics by using root cause analysis, to determine why a problem developed and to track the problem to its source. Another useful analysis is the 5 Whys (<https://isixsigma.com>). This also includes creating and sharing the information as well as developing and linking opportunity through networks. Through the development and sharing of professional, social and knowledge networks, the social capital of all organizational members (including those considered marginalized) can be enhanced to support systems change.

Resolution 3: The company will create a social capital system for all organizational members.

Illustrating the complexity of the problem of African American representation in executive leadership is the intersectionality of many of the drivers of underrepresentation. Companies are not ignorant of the benefits of diversity nor are they ignoring the laws that mandate equity in racial representation. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, companies have spent billions of dollars on mentoring with good intentions, minority recruitment, bias training, and support groups (Gurchiek, 2017). Given that African Americans are still underrepresented in executive positions after the expenditure of billions of dollars, one must challenge the efficacy of mentoring with good intentions, minority recruitment, bias training, and support groups as interventions for ongoing inequality for African Americans at that executive level.

Resolution 4: Measure diversity representation at every level and calculate the cost/benefit of diversity in the organization. Every organization needs a starting point, a “Start Here” button that provides an anchor for every diversity initiative. We recommend that every company begin with culture analysis, because this gives a tangible feel to something that most organizations leave uncontested and untouched because it is often perceived as invisible. Culture is not invisible; rather, it is ignored. After educating thousands of graduate business students, who are non-traditional, fully employed managers and military officers who have important roles in notable and large organizations, we have found that virtually none of the students have any basis for completing a deeply honest organizational culture analysis. As noted earlier, this happens, because universities typically teach culture as theory rather than as an application exercise. This is especially important, because our students work for some of the largest and wealthiest organizations in the world. We have found that a straightforward culture analysis gives everyone a place to find a toehold on the challenging work of bringing about diversity changes. In the Appendix, we have included a tool that we have used with hundreds of organizations to help every organization and instructor clarify the analysis of culture. Instructions are included. We have used Johnson and Scholes (1988) Cultural Web model for this application, because it is at once straightforward and easy for new users to understand while setting the stage to capture the complexity of organizational culture through interdependencies. Our students have successfully used this model for many years (McDonald & Foster, 2013).

Resolution 5: The “Start Here” button for our organization will be a deeply honest culture analysis that will provide a beginning framework for diversity changes to take place. Taken together, these resolutions provide an ample and reliable beginning to any diversity initiative that aim to reduce barriers. The study of tacit organizational factors highlights the barriers encountered by African Americans as they work toward improving their work lives. This literature review emphasizes the ambiguities that create barriers to change and development and improved organizational outcomes while perpetuating outdated and illegal systems. Finally, the impact of these factors is the belief among organizational leaders that “they should have known” whether employees were told or not.

CONCLUSION

Given that African Americans have not attained equal representation in executive positions today, and also given that much of the research into why this condition still stands is between 10 and 15 years old, there is a mandate that future research continue to drive toward understanding racial inequality. Even the vocabulary used to explore the lack of parity between workforce population representation and executive representation has continued to evolve. Future research will require the identification of precise measures for each of the tacit factors identified here. As suggested by Stevenson (2014), individual organizational leaders as well as organizational members must be willing to speak candidly about their experiences and be willing to help organizations make necessary changes as they begin the hard work of barriers to advancement for all employees. Organizations must also realize that with increasing diversity in organizations, those coming from other regions and countries have different social, political and racial perceptions which provide different interpretations and sense-making issues for the organization (Kang, et al. 2015). This indicates the importance of determining how perceptions are formed, so they can be addressed at the organizational level.

This paper represents an effort to look more deeply into diversity issues that are still evident as represented by the lack of African Americans in executive positions. Effective changes must be made in organizations by examining the ignored aspects of organizational operations, because this is a more effective approach than implementing another diversity activity which may have limited success. Diversity efforts cannot be improved by blaming white males, and no blame is intended within this review of literature; instead, these authors call on organizations to do as Kanter (1977) suggested - to look to themselves for resolution of this enduring challenge. We call them to, through sincere leadership efforts and resolute diversity initiatives, find the organizational practices, policies and unspoken behaviors that continue to perpetuate workplace inequality.

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Appendix A: Cultural Assessment

Culture dimension	Strengths	Weaknesses
Paradigm	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Symbols	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Power structures	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Organizational Structures	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Control System	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Rituals and Routines	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Stories	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

*To use this tool correctly, complete each cell with a minimum of three strengths and three weaknesses for each dimension of culture. You can enter as many strengths and weaknesses as you wish into any cell. Let multiple people work on this table. By including more people and varied people, you build accuracy and reliability into your Start Here button. The information can be collected from employees at any level, your observations, your personal experiences, or news articles from well respected and relevant publications. Do not leave any cells empty, because that builds bias into your analysis. Bias means you have error in your analysis. When completed, look at your final table. Did you have any outstanding cells? Do you have any cells with many entries?

After completing the table, prioritize strengths and weaknesses, so you have the top five strengths (things you do well) and the top five weaknesses (things where you really need improvement sooner rather than later). Do not try to address more than this the first time, because you will overwhelm yourself. Compare answers from others and begin searching for common themes toward building consensus. Arrive at a final list of 10 items, still containing five of each strengths and weaknesses. Do your final 10 items accurately represent your original completed table?

Now, using those 10 items, try to fit them into Schein’s layers: 1) basic assumptions (e.g. Human rights is not our primary platform; instead, we serve stakeholder outcomes.), 2)

values, (e.g. We value honesty in all of our transactions.) and 3) artifacts (e.g. We maintain a professional environment at all times.) How balanced is your response? Organizational culture is a living system, and when one piece gets out of balance relative to others, you have a clear marker for action.

Now you have a specific and reliable **Start Here!** button for your diversity initiative that is aligned with your organizational values.

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