How Can a Company Support Executive Level Employment Opportunities to its Minority Gender Workforce?

Amy Plew

COML/ORGL 506B1

Professor Schlossberg

April 10, 2021

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of research that discusses the challenges within organizational leadership that prohibits the advancement of minority gender to executive level positions. The research identifies reasons why advancement is not occurring in organizations today, data to support the disparity in advancement, possible reasons why minority genders are not occupying executive positions and opportunities for improvement in awareness and policy moving forward to eliminate the bias towards these individuals in the workforce. Overt discrimination is defined as the use of gender as a criterion for employment related decisions. This type of discrimination was targeted by Title VVII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited making decision based on sex (as well as on race/ethnicity, national origin, and religion) in employment related matters such as hiring, firing and promotions (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002). The research in this paper brings to light ways for organizations to incorporate thinking, process and ways of engagement into their daily professional and personal lives in order to hold themselves accountable for inclusion of a diverse executive leadership team.

How Can a Company Support Executive "Level" Employment Opportunities to its Minority Gender Workforce?

The concept of a diverse workforce in senior roles and how a company can support the advancement of minorities in order to create a robust and thriving culture for their company. The overrepresentation of White men and the underrepresentation of White women, Black men, and Black women in both middle-level and senior-level management positions remains an important social problem and an important site for understanding power relations in the United States (Bloch, Taylor, Church, & Buck, 2020). Research shows workplace size (measured by the number of employees) is related to women's opportunities for management. Larger workplaces are more likely to have formalized personnel systems and policies that may lessen discrimination, but these personnel systems and policies affect and individuals' access to management may vary by the individual's race/ethnicity and gender (Bloch, Taylor, Church, & Buck, 2020). One scholar suggests that diversity initiatives replacing Affirmation Action programs may have weakened the effects of formalization in disrupting inequality regimes (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002).

This paper seeks to uncover from the literature ways in which a company or organization can become aware of the current statistics and support minority advancement to executive level positions through awareness of data presented. This concept of executive inclusion is multifaceted and incredibly complex, and the root of advancement is bias.

The mobility outcomes of females and African Americans are consistent with several theories of discrimination and/or bias. Board of directors could have a taste-based preference against working with female and African American executives, statistically discriminate against them,

be biased by stereotyping, or making attribution-bias errors (Guest, 2016).

Literature Review

2015 Workplace Data Results

According to 2015 U.S. Census estimates, the United States' population was 30.6% White men, 31.4% White women, 7.6% Black women and 7% Black Men. In workplaces reporting to the EEOC in the same year, White men comprised 46.72%, White women 29.6%, Black women 3.81%, and Black men 3.64% of middle level management. Within senior management positions, White men's share of management was 61.83%, whereas White women's share was 24.3%. Further both Black women and Black men's share of management was below 2% of all senior management positions. (Bloch, Taylor, Church, & Buck, 2020). This data is critical to understanding the disparity in roles in Executive positions. What these numbers do not represent are those minorities outside White women, Black men and Black women. Paul Guest, a scholar who has studied Executive Minority Status, determined that female executives compared to male executives face a lower probability of promotion and a higher probability of exit. African Americans face a lower probability of promotion and a higher probability of demotion and exit. In contrast, Asian and Hispanics do not experience differences in mobility outcomes compared to Caucasians (Guest, 2016).

Possible Reasons why Minority Genders are Not Occupying Executive Positions

Located in the UK, Viki Holton and Fiona Elsa Dent studied "A better career environment for women: developing a blueprint for individuals and organizations", and according to their research, found that women lack self-confidence, feel excluded in male-only

clubs, miss out on key work assignments because of assumptions about what women could and could not do, labeled on the "Mommy Track" and other forms of gender inequality. Additionally, when they were provided with reviews there was different more critical language used compared to their male colleagues (Holton & Dent, 2016). Finally, the tension of balancing work and family responsibilities would bring more women to leave a job versus a male. (Holton & Dent, 2016).

Authors Myrtle Bell, Mary McLaughlin and Jennifer Sequeira, describe in their manuscript "Discrimination, Harassment, and the Glass Ceiling, Women Executives as Change Agents" that women may not occupying Executive roles due to Overt discrimination, Sexual harassment, and The Glass Ceiling (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002). Authors Sreedhari Desai, Dolly Chugh and Arthur Brief discuss The Implications of Marriage Structure for Men's Workplace Attitudes, Beliefs and Behaviors toward Women in their research and found men tend to view the presence of women in the workplace unfavorably, perceive the organizations with a higher number of female employees operate less smoothly, find organizations with female leaders unattractive, and are more likely to deny qualified female opportunities for promotions(Desai, Chugh, & Brief, 2014).

How can Executive Management incorporate Minority Gender Inclusion?

A woman is more likely to lead an organization from the center of a network of interrelated teams, than from the top of traditional command hierarchy, which provides insights into all layers of the organization (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002). Another benefit of women leading may be a higher satisfaction and retention of other managerial and professional women – those who would be future executives shaping future policies (Bell, McLaughlin, &

Sequeira, 2002).

Organizations can provide a more inclusive work environment for women that includes direct support and commitment from the Chief Executive Officer and Senior management, Senior management modeling a female friendly environment culture and attitude, flexible working hours and job share in Executive positions, training and development, leadership programs, application process for internal candidates to apply for managerial and leadership positions once the training has been completed, development, mentoring and coaching, and talent management (Holton & Dent, 2016).

Conclusion

A climate of intolerance of harassment is associated with a climate of tolerance for differences (e.g., in terms of race or ethnicity, culture, religion or physical ability) and one that supports employee growth, participation, and empowerment through training, mentoring programs, and equitable pay for all employees. Such a climate is associated with a positive public image, and the concomitant attraction and retention of top talent (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002). The glass ceiling is still intact in many organizations. The low number of women at senior levels indicates how great the challenge still is. There are only four percent female CEOs among the leading Standard & Poor's 500 Companies in the USA (Holton & Dent, 2016). Although still underrepresented, White women have larger shares of management relative to Black men and Black women (Bloch, Taylor, Church, & Buck, 2020). The findings give credence to the argument that Black women face stark barriers to middle and senior management positions (Bloch, Taylor, Church, & Buck, 2020).

References

Bell, M. P., McLaughlin, M. E., & Sequeira, J. M. (2002, April). Discrimination, harassment, and the glass ceiling: Women executives as change agents. *Journal of Business Ethics, 37*(1), 65-76.

Bloch, K. R., Taylor, T., Church, J., & Buck, A. (2020). An Intersectonal Approach to the Glass Ceiling: Gender, Race and Share of Middle and Senior Management in U.S. Workplaces. *Sex Roles, 6*(22), 84, 312-325.

Desai, S. D., Chugh, D., & Brief, A. P. (2014). The Implications of Marriage Structure for Men's Workplace Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors toward Women. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 59*(2), 330-365.

Guest, P. M. (2016, October). Executive Mobility and Minority Status. *Industrial Relations, 55*(4), 604-631.

Holton, V., & Dent, F. E. (2016). A better career environment for Women: developing a blueprint for individuals and organizations. *Gender in management , 31*(8), 542-561.