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Equality Initiatives for Women in America

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Abstract

The employment of women in America has substantially increased over the last century. Social pressure has led to an increase in legislation for employers to provide equal opportunities for women in the workplace. However, women face complex challenges that their male counterparts do not. Outside of obligatory legislation measures there are steps employers can take to create a culture that fosters an environment where employees can appreciate one another for their differences and use their experiences to benefit the organization. This paper is to examine the history of women’s increased employment in America, the challenges they have faced to acquire equitable treatment, and what companies can do to foster inclusion for women in their culture.

Equality Initiatives for Women in America

For the past century American employers have been faced with the social and ethical equality movement commonly referred to as Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DE&I). DE&I initiatives generally refer to organizations implementing policies and procedures to strive for a more diverse and equitable workforce. Women's roles in today's society are vastly different than they were a century ago. Once perceived primarily as domestic caretakers with responsibilities solely in the home, women are now an integral part of the workplace. Today, seeing a variety of women from various backgrounds working outside the home is common. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2019 women made up forty-seven percent of the total labor force. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021) Even though women make up nearly half of workers in the United States, their opportunities and earnings are not equal to their male peers. This research is to specifically review the history of women's employment, the challenges they face, and how companies can foster an equitable workforce for women today.

History of Women in the Workplace

Multiple acts of legislation have been implemented by the United States in an attempt to bridge the gaps in pay and representation for women. Examples of such legislation are The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and The Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was enacted to prevent employers from being able to take sex into account when paying wages in the same or equal jobs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is perhaps one of the most notable laws to kick-start workplace equality initiatives. The Civil Rights Act prohibited employers from discriminating against people due to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. More recent legislation, such as The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 has also been passed in an effort to assist women in holding employers accountable for pay discrimination.

While actions from the government have made it a requirement for employers to evolve toward more inclusive work practices, pressure from civil rights groups contributed to the enactment and ongoing success of such legislation. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are two renowned groups known for speaking out against inequality in workplaces and supporting workers in fighting for equal rights. Throughout history, these groups have provided people with the resources they need to know their rights and other resources as needed in the communities they serve.

There were several contributing factors to the rise of employment of women. First was an increase in the availability for women to get an education and as technology changed, and we shifted out of the industrial revolution, there was a greater demand for more workers in general. Particularly, women were seen as valuable in clerical roles. However, the largest push for women in the workplace is commonly recognized to be World War II. The number of working women doubled between 1940 and 1950.

Multiple researchers have studied the employment rates among women and the socioeconomic factors that have contributed to their increase in employment over time:

> The participation rate of white, married women 45-54 years old was 10.1 percent in 1940 but 22.2 percent in 1950. The timing of the initial advance in married women's employment and the extensive propaganda used to attract women into

> the labor force during the war have led many to credit World War II with spurring the modern increase in married women's paid employment. (Goldin, 1991, p. 1).

Some would expect that after the war women may resume their traditional roles in the home, and their employment would decrease over time once the war was over. However, this assumption would prove to be false over the decades following the end of World War II. American economic historian Claudia Goldin (1991) identified that before World War II many places of employment did not allow married women to work, and women who did work were expected to leave the workforce once they married. These “marriage bars” were almost completely dissolved by the 1950s (Goldin, 1991). The disappearing act of these “marriage bars” suggests that because of World War II, employers were beginning to recognize the increased value of having women in the workplace.

One UCLA researcher, Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer (1973), devoted her career to studying these trends and how changes in the economy and culture contributed to changes in employment statistics in women. She identified through her research that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1940, 30% of women between the ages of 18-64 were in the workforce overall, and this increased to 50% of women in the same age group by 1970 (Oppenheimer, 1973). Perhaps the most insightful trend she identified was the consistent increase in jobs that were available and perceived to be for women. “The major reason for the rapid rise in the demand for female labor is that by the early 20th-century women workers had monopolized several occupations which were destined to expand enormously with the continued industrial growth of our society” (Oppenheimer, 1973, p. 5). Oppenheimer (1973) goes on to identify the occupations women predominantly held at higher rates than their male peers. Examples include teachers, nurses, librarians, and secretaries.

On June 10th, 1963, referencing the Equal Pay Act, President Kennedy stated:

> This act represents many years of effort by labor, management, and several private organizations unassociated with labor or management, to call attention to the unconscionable practice of paying female employees less wages than male employees for the same job… While much remains to be done to achieve full equality of economic opportunity--for the average woman worker earns only 60 percent of the average wage for men--this legislation is a significant step forward. Our economy today depends upon women in the labor force. One out of three workers is a woman. Today, there are almost 25 million women employed, and their number is rising faster than the number of men in the labor force. (1963)

By the time President John F. Kennedy signed The Equal Pay Act the number of women entering the workforce had been increasing for decades. As Oppenheimer observed; in the mid-twentieth century, certain jobs were more predominately held by women. If these jobs were almost entirely made up of the female sex, why did fair pay come into question? It is important to understand that such jobs were overall undervalued or underpaid by society, and this contributed to them being predominately held by women. Additionally, jobs with a high number of female employees were not immune to the general economical principle of supply and demand. As more women entered the workforce and the supply increased, employers were able to keep wages low in these jobs since there were plenty of women willing to fill them. Teaching occupations may be one of the most tragic, albeit ironic, cases of such wage suppression. For example, teaching, especially in rural areas, was a very poorly paid occupation at this timeframe. More women began completing higher education, and thus there were more teachers available. Employers used this “over-supply” of women available to work to their advantage. Instead of hiring the most qualified candidates (regardless of sex) and paying them a higher wage, employers hired more women and paid them a lower wage. Women were not in a position to advocate for higher wages, as they knew they could be replaced by someone willing to take less. Researcher and historian Susan B. Carter conducted extensive research on teachers’ wages and how they relate to the economy. She concluded:

> American school boards responded to low female teachers' wages by hiring more teachers, which reduced class size, and young people (and their parents) responded to small class size with high levels of attendance. Thus, the severely limited employment opportunities for educated women set in motion a self-reinforcing cycle in which initially high levels of school attendance for young women increased the supply of female teachers, depressed teachers' wages, raised school quality, and encouraged yet more young women (and men) of the next generation to attend. (Carter, 1986, p. 2).

Leading up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, In June of 1963 President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation:

> This Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free…There are other necessary measure which only the Congress can provide, and they must be provided at this session. (Kennedy, 1963)

President Kennedy was advocating for Congress to write a comprehensive civil rights bill to ensure freedom and equal opportunities for all citizens of the United States. In November of the same year, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and Lyndon B. Johnson took his place. In 1964 The Civil Rights Act was signed into law by President Johnson. Many believe The Civil Rights Act to be the most profound law passed toward equality in the United States. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. described the Act as a “second emancipation.” The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits segregation and discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act specifically covers employment discrimination. Title VII also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to monitor and hold employers accountable for following the law. Title VII did not initially cover discrimination based on sex. Virginian United States representative Howard W. Smith introduced an amendment that would allow “sex” as a protection under the Civil Rights Act because he thought in doing so the law would fail. Smith was a fierce opponent of civil rights and is quoted joking about the difficulties women must be facing in their “right to a nice husband and family.” Of course, the law did pass, and The House voted 289–126 to approve the bill on July 2, 1964. Ironically, Smith’s actions may serve to show just how important his amendment was in the fight for equal rights for women (Breitzer, 2022).

Black women have the unique experience in the workplace of being discriminated against for both their sex and their skin color. The Department of Labor reports that in 2021 Black women made 63 cents for every dollar a white man made.

Their research shows that even when a Black woman holds a bachelor's degree, she still only makes 65 cents for every dollar a white man with a bachelor's degree makes. "In fact, Black women with advanced degrees have median weekly earnings less than white men with only a bachelor's degree" (Roux, 2021). This is a significant disparity for women of color and impacts their entire life. Since women of color are earning less, even when having an equal or advanced degree, it takes them much longer to pay off their student loans. A 2018 study by the American Association of University Women states:

> Student debt and the pay gap mean that women have a more challenging time making ends meet while they are repaying their loans. In 2012, among students who graduated in 2007–08, women working full time had paid off 33 percent of their student loan debt on average, while men working full time had paid off 44 percent of their debt. Black and Hispanic women working full time are paid considerably less than men from these groups, and they struggle to pay off student loans promptly: Four years after graduation, black and Hispanic women had paid off less than 10 percent of their debt—much less than other women and men (Miller et al., 2018, p. 13).

American Association of University Women

FIGURE 9: Cumulative Student Debt for 2007-08 College Graduates, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	Total average debt owed, 2009	Total average debt owed, 2012	Percentage of debt paid off, 2009-12
Men	**$22,656**	**$12,793**	**44%**
Women	**$24,126**	**$16,105**	**33%**
Asian	$19,687	$7,679	61%
White (non-Hispanic)	$24,479	$15,417	37%
Black or African American	$26,535	$24,116	9%
Hispanic or Latina	$21,626	$21,026	3%

Source: AAUW analysis of U.S. Department of Education (2015)

The National Committee of Pay Equity hosts an annual "Equal Pay Day" campaign. This is a public awareness event to demonstrate the pay gap between men and women. The "Equal Pay Day" date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. In 2021 the "Equal Pay Day" for African American women was August 3rd, 132 days longer than the March 24th date average for all women. (National Committee of Pay Equity, n.d.)

Referred to as the "lifetime wage gap" the pay disparity black women face accumulates over the course of their career. "Over a 40-year career, Black women typically lose $941,600, Native American women typically lose $1,035,360, and Latinas typically lose $1,121,440 in comparison to white, non-Hispanic men" (Fins, 2020, p. 1). Based off this data a Black woman would need to work 25 more years than a white man to reach the same career earnings. Additionally, this disparity impacts more than just their base earnings. Earning a lower wage means Black women and their employers contribute less to social security and their retirement plans. This is less money Black women are able to invest into themselves or their children, therefore perpetuating poverty onto the next generation.

National Women's Law Center

HOW MUCH ARE WOMEN LOSING OVER A 40-YEAR CAREER COMPARED TO A WHITE, NON-HISPANIC MAN?

Comparison	What a woman makes for every dollar a man makes	What a woman typically loses over a 40-year career, based on today's wage gap	Age at which a woman's career earnings catch up to a man's career at age 60
Women Overall v. Men Overall	$0.82	$407,760	69
Asian Women v. White, non-Hispanic Men	$0.90	$240,280	64
White, non-Hispanic Women v. White, non-Hispanic Men	$0.79	$527,440	70
Black Women v. White, non-Hispanic Men	$0.62	$941,600	84
Native American Women v. White, non-Hispanic Men	$0.57	$1,035,360	90
Latinas v. White, non-Hispanic Men	$0.54	$1,121,440	93

"What a woman makes for every dollar a man makes" is the ratio of women's and men's median earnings for full time, year round workers. Earnings are in 2018 dollars. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement and 2018 American Community Survey. Figures do not account for inflation. Assumes all workers begin full time, year round work at age 20.

Investigation surrounding Black women in the workplace and their unique experiences, challenges, and needs has been scarce. Authors Ashleigh S. Rosette and Robert W. Livingston (2012) draw attention to this lapse in research stating, "nearly all previous research that has focused concurrently on diversity and leadership has compared White men to White women when considering gender, and has compared White men to Black men when considering race" (Rosette & Livingston, 2012, p. 1). The researchers set out to review the organizational performance of Black women in leadership. They hypothesized "Because Black women possess not just one, but two, subordinate identities… they will be perceived most negatively in a context of failure when compared to Black men and White women" (Rosette & Livingston, 2012, p. 2). Their findings indicated that when Black women experience success, they are likely to be compared to either white women or Black men who only have a single trait known to foster bias. However, in times when organizational performance is low, Black female executives may be judged more harshly than either white women or Black men. "Black women executives may have to work exceptionally hard to minimize mistakes made on the job as their penalty for doing so may be greater than consequences experienced by White women and Black men" (Rosette & Livingston, 2012, p. 5).

In 2021 ABC News reported that women broke records on the Fortune 500 list with 41 company's having female CEO's. Only two of these women were African Americans; Rosalind Brewer of Walgreens Boots Alliance and Thasunda Brown Duckett of TIAA. Before 2021 only one other African American female had made the list, Ursula Burns, former CEO of Xerox (Dunn, 2021). While these numbers indicate improvement for African American women's equality in the workplace, there is no denying that society and corporate America are moving at a less-than snail's pace. However, researchers like Ashleigh S. Rosette and Robert W. Livingston (2012) are hopeful that even these small victories for African American women will encourage more research into the disadvantages they face and how we can remedy them.

By the 1990's the Equal Pay Act and The Civil Rights Act had been in place for about three decades, yet statistics show women were still struggling to achieve the earnings potential and representation of their male peers. According to a Statistical Analysis Report published in 1996 by the National Center for Educational Statistics, on average, "Male public school teachers earn between 10 to 13 percent more than females” (Gruber, 1996). While this is a major improvement from John F. Kennedy’s 60 cents for every dollar in 1963, it shows that decade’s later women were still struggling be perceived as being equally valuable. This research only analyzed race differences among male teachers but did show that white men made approximately 4 percent more than their Black peers. Additionally, the same analysis identified that unmarried females earned more than married females (Gruber, 1996). This indicates deep-rooted pay discrimination practices over the years where it is assumed women lose value in the workforce due to life events unrelated to their careers. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that at the current rate, women will not achieve equal pay until 2059 (Leisenring, 2021).

Although The Equal Pay Act was groundbreaking legislation and a move in the right direction for women’s pay equality, society has still struggled to enhance pay equality and hold employers accountable for disparities. The Equal Pay Act includes broad language when referring to reasons why an employer may pay employees different rates of pay. The law states employers must pay employees equal wages unless they can show reasons wages are different due to a seniority system, a merit system, a system that measures earnings by quantity or quality of production, or a differential based on anything other than sex. (Equal Pay Act, of 1963) Many researchers have scrutinized “a differential based on anything other than sex” claiming it is too broad to effectively hold employers accountable.

In her article “Salary History and the Equal Pay Act: An Argument for the Adoption of Reckless Discrimination as a Theory of Liability” author Kate Vanderberg (2020) identifies several examples of employers not being held accountable when paying unequal wages. In the examples she uses in this article, employers claim to base salary on the employees' previous salary history. They claim this practice is acceptable because it falls under "a differential based on anything other than sex" and is not discriminatory against women. Her research includes a female math consultant by the name of Ailene Rizo. Ailene was hired as a math consultant for Fresno County School District in 2009 and discovered all of her male peers were being paid a higher salary than Rizo. Her employer did not deny claims they were paying Rizo less than her male peers. "Instead, it raised the affirmative defense that the wage differential was due to a factor "other than sex" because they used her prior salary to determine where to start her on a salary schedule." (Vandenberg, 2020, p. 3.) Rizzo's case was monumental in California and in April of 2017 made it all the way to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit which ruled that using prior salary history was permissible under The Equal Pay Act if the employer can show a reasonable business policy. This case has made it all the way through to the United States Supreme Court and is still ongoing as of 2019.

Since women are known to be underpaid across all industries, it makes sense that using previous salary history is a discriminatory practice, as the probability of a women being underpaid in her previous position is likely. Vandenberg (2020) states "A Supreme Court holding that salary history cannot be used as part of the "factor other than sex" affirmative defense to an EPA claim would be an important first step towards closing the gender pay gap." (Vanderberg, 2020, p. 4). She goes on to explain that not only should the use of salary history be excluded under the Equal Employment Act but undermines the purpose of the act altogether. Across the United States different states and even localities have passed varying legislation on the legality of using prior salary history to determine wages for employees. Examples of states that have banned asking about salary history from private and public employers are California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Vermont.

More recent legislation has been brought forward in the last few decades in an attempt to further close the gender wage gap. In 2009 President Barack Obama signed The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act which amended the Civil Rights Act and makes holding employers accountable for unfair pay practices easier. Michelle Wade & Susan Fiorentino (2017) researched The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in their paper "Gender Pay Inequality: An Examination of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act Six Years Later." To provide history behind this legislation; Lilly Ledbetter was an employee for Goodyear Tire Company for nearly two decades when she discovered, through an anonymous tip, she was being paid less than her male peers. She sued General Tire Company claiming gender discrimination under The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Initially, the court ruled in her favor, but General Tire Company appealed this decision as under The Civil Rights Act, Lilly would have had to have filed her complaint within 180 days of the initial action. Of course, this would mean Lilly would have had to of known within 180 days of the day she was hired, or when other discrimination occurred throughout her career, and without the anonymous tip she received she may have never found out. (Wade & Fiorentino, 2017)

The Lilly Ledbetter Pay Act:

> The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act amended Title VII of the Civil Right Act of 1964. According to the law, a compensation decision that discriminates against a

> person is illegal each time the act occurs – as with receipt of a paycheck—and not just when the initial pay decision is made. (Wade & Fiorentino, 2017, p. 2).

An additional piece of legislation titled The Paycheck Fairness Act has been presented to congress multiple times in the last 25 years. The purpose of this new legislation is to update and reinforce features of The Equal Pay Act. According to a 2014 issue of Congressional Digest “The measure is intended to give workers stronger tools to combat wage discrimination, to bar discrimination against employers for discussing salary information, and to ensure full compensation for those who have been discriminated against on the basis of gender.” (The Congressional Digest, 2014) The Paycheck Fairness Act has gained support from several organizations, including the ACLU who believe the Act could help ensure “equal pay for equal work.” According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013 women on average earned 78 cents for every dollar a man earned. African American women earned roughly 64 cents and Latinas only 56 cents for each dollar earned by a white male. (ACLU, 2013) Most recently, in 2021 The Paycheck Fairness Act failed to move forward when the senate blocked the bill 49-50.

Planning a diverse work environment

Leaders may recognize that there is a need for more diversity in their organization, but it may not always be initially clear “how or why.” It is important the organization defines what their vision is as it relates to developing workplace diversity and how it impacts the company’s goals. Once the organization knows what they are trying to accomplish they can plan to see policy implementation through. From a technical standpoint, companies developing diversity initiatives will be working toward creating an inclusive environment for all employees and not focused on any particular group.

Many organizations rely on their Human Resources department to lead such initiatives. This is largely due to the fact Human Resource professionals are thought to be trained in organizational development, inclusion practices, workforce training, and other company morale initiatives. There are also several technical factors. For example, a company's employee demographic information like pay, race, gender, etc., is often tracked by the Human Resource department. Human Resource professionals can use this information to identify gaps in equality and drive change in the organization.

In their article "Leveraging diversity to improve business performance: Research findings and recommendations for organizations" authors Jayne & Dipboye (2004) take a high-level view of how organizations can reap the benefits of successful diversity initiatives. Their research defines functional steps Human Resource professionals can take to enhance the outcomes of these initiatives. Many companies begin the journey to developing a more diverse environment by engineering diversity programs. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) define diversity programs as "efforts to recruit, retain, and develop employees from underrepresented groups." (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 3). They also examine other specific characteristics that make up successful diversity initiatives.

Jayne and Dipboye (2004) asserted that top leadership support in an organization is crucial in the success of Human Resources implementation of diversity initiatives. They analyze a 1995 field survey conducted by Sarah Rynes and Benson Rosen of 785 Human Resource professionals answering questions pertaining to diversity in their organizations. The conclusion of this survey was "the factor that was most strongly related to successful diversity training was the perception that top management supported the diversity training." (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 6). 23 years later the importance of leadership supporting workplace diversity stands. A 2018 study conducted by Buengeler, Leroy, and De Stobbeleir agree with the concept that workplace initiatives must have full leadership buy-in. "Adding to their direct impact on employee felt inclusion, leaders have also been argued to be critical drivers of the communication and implementation of HR practices: in their role as direct supervisor, leaders are important gatekeepers to the success of HR practices." (p. 290). Company leadership is the face of the organization, and employees observe their leadership for authenticity. If employees find their leadership is not authentic in their motives, then the employees will question the sincerity behind diversity initiatives. In companies where diversity has not been seen as a priority in the past it is crucial to show a genuine desire among leaders to imbed diversity in company culture, and not just as a momentary fad in the company.

Defining what diversity means to an organization is fundamental to kicking-off diversity initiatives. Having a vision for the organization will help keep true to their goals and give employees a point of reference for understanding these initiatives. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) analyzed diversity statements from Fortune magazine's 50 Top Companies for Minorities. "A common theme of each statement is a reference to embracing all employees under the umbrella of diversity." (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 2). These organizations have placed value on recognizing that everyone is different and embracing people for how their differences make them valuable to the company. They do not focus on diversity as being for the purpose of improving outcomes for only minorities or protected classes. This is crucial to note as studies show that employers have the most success in building diversity when they foster a culture of inclusivity. This means everyone in the company feels they bring something important to the table which allows them to embrace others for their uniqueness.

According to Lisa H. Nishii (2013) with Cornell University, “In inclusive environments, individuals of all backgrounds—not just members of historically powerful identity groups—are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making.” (Nishii, 2013, p. 1.) Nishii (2013) is described as “an expert on inclusion in organizations.” Her research focuses on the confluence of organizational practices, leadership behaviors, and climate for inclusion on individual- and group-level outcomes.” (Cornell University, *Lisa Nishii*) In her article “The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups” she does an in-depth analysis of inclusion initiatives in organizations and the factors that make them successful. She describes the importance of all employees benefiting from inclusion initiatives, including those who are not minorities in the organization. Research has shown that initiatives that solely focus on improving outcomes for minorities are prone to failure for several reasons. Most notably, when companies focus on inclusion initiatives advocating for only minorities, the majority of the population will not feel that these initiatives pertain to them. They may not see a reason to be involved and may either ignore the changes altogether or worse, feel threatened. This can cause resentment and tension in the workforce; an obvious failure on the company’s part leading to negative employee morale. (Nishii, 2013)

Nishii (2013) goes on to identify the characteristics of a healthy and diverse environment. She reiterates the idea that organizations and Human Resource departments foster guidance that improves employee's ability to recognize how ideas from diverse backgrounds lead to creativity, insight, and improves problem-solving. As people learn to appreciate each other's differences they can reduce their own biases. Employees will then begin to seek-out opinions other than their own to achieve transformative problem-solving. "In inclusive climates, the questioning of dominant assumptions is not seen as a threat, but rather as a value-enhancing proposition." (Nishii, 2013, p. 4.) She goes on to further describe observable institutional changes resulting from successful diversity initiatives. Employees in inclusive environments will feel more comfortable in their own skin and with being authentic. Team members will then become more comfortable and trusting of one another; leading to higher productivity outcomes as well as employee satisfaction. (Nishii, 2013)

The research of Buengeler et al. (2018) is complimentary of Nishii's concepts. They hypothesize that an ideal environment is not one where everyone is perceived as the same but are recognized for their unique contributions to the team. The authors specifically reference performance reviews and encourage Human Resource leaders to train leaders on how to manage people as individuals instead of hyper-focusing on treating everyone "fair." They go on to give examples of practices companies can implement to benefit everyone in the organization. For example, if leaders allow more flexibility to women because they are seen as the primary caregivers for children, this can lead to resentment from men on the team. Alternatively, companies should implement policies that allow flexibility for everyone in the organization and encourage people to take advantage of these flexible arrangements. Not only does this allow everyone to benefit from work-life balance arrangements but helps prevent women from being perceived as contributing less to the workplace. (Buengeler et al., 2018)

After a company has received leadership buy-in and defined their diversity vision statement and set the tone for what an inclusive culture looks like in their organization, additional consideration should be what goals they hope to accomplish. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) state “Successful diversity programs are based on specific goals with feedback provided on how well the programs achieve these goals.” (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 6.) They clarify that this should not be confused with quotas. Goals should be viewed as opportunities, not as a tool for intimidation. Companies may have objectives to hire or promote more minorities, however, the focus should be on changes like improving flexible work environments, increasing opportunities for furthering education, implementing mentoring programs, or being more involved in community service. If companies are able to implement changes to reach these types of goals, the increase in diversity should happen organically. For example, if the employees in the organization are secure in their unique differences and are able to recognize how those differences bring value to their work, they can feel comfortable in hiring people who bring different characteristics to the workplace. The authors also encourage companies to consult with legal counsel to ensure that during their goal planning they are mindful of all employment laws.

Human Resource teams will need to create training for their organization to develop their diversity program. The training portion of a diversity program is deeply complex. As formerly reviewed, leadership support is a crucial part of the success in diversity training. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) suggest forming a team within the company that is committed to the goals of the program on an authentic level to "champion" the diversity program. "A senior leader champion is necessary to guide the team toward identifying meaningful metrics, provide the team with sufficient resources, and help team members overcome the inevitable resistance they are likely to face." (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 12). This group can help maintain the integrity of the program throughout the organization and be role-models as the company conducts training. They should also be advocates of the company's diversity statement and can ensure the training is reflective of the diversity initiatives. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) encourage Human Resource professionals to ensure this team is diverse both in skills and in demographics. Having a diverse team advocating for inclusion will help cultivate ideas for meeting the needs of the workforce as a whole, not just the needs of a select group. This can also help employees who are not minorities view the initiatives as opportunities for positive changes for all members of the organization which prevents a lack of engagement from people who won't believe the initiatives are "for them." Additionally, cultivating a diverse internal team leading diversity and inclusion efforts will enforce the overall credibility of the program.

Jones et al. (2013) reviewed several decades of diversity training programs and identified the characteristics that contributed to their success. They identified that one of the main characteristics that lead to resistance in employees accepting diversity training is when they perceive the training to only be for what they define as a "business case." "One explanation for resistance to diversity training is that the training is typically based on "the business case" for diversity, where diversity is justified on the basis of its contribution to the organization's bottom line." (Jones et al., 2013 p. 2) Instead, they encourage employers to take an ethical approach to their training. Much like when setting goals, training should be focused on what values the company hopes to instill in their culture. They can focus on valuing their workforce, caring about the local communities, and appreciating differences in the organization. Furthermore, people are more likely to care about fairness within the organization than worry about the company's "bottom-line" initiatives like appeasing shareholders.

What do Women offer organizations?

After reviewing the history leading up to women in the workplace it may seem employers do not have as much incentive to hire and retain female talent. Afterall, the history of women in the workforce seems to be filled with legislation and controversy. Substantial research has been conducted on the benefits of developing a diverse workforce, the distinctive attributes diverse groups bring to the table and how companies can leverage their unique strengths to the company's advantage. Companies and women need to view their working-relationship as symbiotic where each party is winning. Having a holistic or "big picture" view of the workforce culture a company would like to have can help them meet diversity and inclusion goals.

Companies who support initiatives for diversity and inclusion may benefit by having women in leadership positions. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) proposed that "Having a top management team that is diverse is perhaps the most powerful way of conveying this support." (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 6). Previous analysis demonstrated that employees are more open to diversity efforts when the company shows a genuine concern for inclusion and fairness among employees. Employees also have a greater appreciation when they perceive their organization to care about local communities rather than their "bottom line." As leaders, women are shown to best encompass these characteristics. In 2015 Corinne Post of Lehigh University and Kris Byron of Georgia State University published a study reviewing the impact women have in leadership. They found that women are more likely to have a philanthropic mindset and a wider variety of social networks. Their analysis also reports that women conduct decision making in a way that leads to fairer outcomes, whereas their male peers were more likely to base decision making using traditional rules and regulations. (Post &Byron, 2015)

Research shows that women leaders excel in promoting employee engagement and career development for their employees. A 2017 study conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership and Watermark (a leading community of top women executives in the San Fransico Bay Area) found that people with female bosses reported feeling greater support in career advancement versus their peers with male bosses. "Gallup polls since the 1950s have shown that both men and women in the US prefer male bosses over female bosses." (Clerkin, 2017, p. 9). Furthermore, the study found that women with male bosses were the most unlikely to have support in their career development and goals. People with female bosses also report lower levels of burnout than those with a male boss. Organizations with higher populations of women reported higher overall job satisfaction, enjoyable work, and opportunities to make a difference. (Clerkin, 2017)

Studies show having women as CEO's and on the board of directors may help a company be more innovative and strategic. "Scholarship on the effect of board composition on firm outcomes supports this view, finding that boards that include a critical mass of women are more likely than other firms to pursue innovative management strategies, business practices, and personnel initiatives." (Cook & Glass, 2017, pp. 2-3). This may be because when women work together, they are more likely to support each other's career goals and have mentors guiding them. For example, having women on the board of directors has shown to be beneficial to women in CEO positions as they are more likely to get the resources, they need to reach their goals. (Cook & Glass, 2017)

Individuals having career support and job fulfillment is not only beneficial for the employees; but studies show it also benefits the employers. The last few decades have fostered multiple studies on organizational support theory, and perceived organizational support. "Organizational support theory (OST), perceived organizational support (POS), refers to the degree to which employees believe their work organization values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing." (Baran et al., 2011. p. 1). These studies found that when employees feel valued and supported, they are likely to reciprocate those feelings back toward the organization. Employees with higher levels of perceived occupational support report having stronger self-concept which leads to employees having more confidence in their roles. The authors also noted that employees with higher organization support who are "customer-facing" were observed to have higher work performance, which represents the organization favorably to customers. These attributes can help reduce employee turnover, increase teamwork, and encourage problem solving. (Baran et al., 2011)

Studies have shown that women not only enhance employee esteem and performance but having more women in leadership reduces risk to the organization. A meta-analysis conducted by Seung-Hwan Jeong and David A. Harrison (2017) with the University of Texas at Austin found that women are more risk-averse than men. They identified that women present as less likely to be “overconfident” then their male peers which in-turn leads to more careful strategic planning. They propose that women bring a diverse set of decision-making skills to groups and encourage more active information exchanges. (Jeong & Harrison, 2017) Ultimately their research concluded: “Over years, countries, and many dozens of studies, when there is female representation in the upper echelons, a firm tends to perform better financially.” (Jeong & Harrison, 2017, p. 13)

In 2015 McKinsey & Company partnered with LeanIn.Org to launch an annual study called *Women in the Workplace* to investigate gender diversity. This study has grown to be the largest of its kind and in the last 7 years 750 companies have participated in the study, and over 250,000 people have been surveyed on their experiences. Their goal is to discover what women of diverse backgrounds face at work, track in HR policies and DE&I initiatives, and help companies understand what trends are taking place in the market. McKinsey & Company then uses these statistics to train and advise their clients on best practices for improving DE&I outcomes. (Burns et al., 2022)

In the 2021 publication of *Women in the Workplace* they stated, “Black women are more likely than any other group of employees, including men of color and women of other races and ethnicities, to spend a substantial amount of time on DEI work that falls outside their formal job responsibilities." (Burns et al., 2022, p. 31) They also found that Black women are most likely to speak up for biases and inequalities in the workplace. This shows that Black women bring immense value to their organizations as change-agents and collaborators for equality. Not to mention their willingness to speak out against discrimination can help reduce risk to the organization. This is all while facing increased barriers, underrepresentation, and retaliation. In fact, the research found that 32% of Black women reported facing retaliation for speaking against discrimination, compared to only 6% of white males. (Burns et al., 2022).

What Women Want

After reviewing the history of women in the workplace, basic diversity policy implementation, and the unique attributes women bring to the workforce, the next thing to address are initiatives geared toward women in the workforce. These initiatives should overall promote a work environment that is inclusive for all employees and fosters an environment where everyone feels included. However, there are characteristics women in particular look for in an organization. Among these are flexibility, mentorship, and career equality.

In 2016 Gallup released their report: Women in America: Work and Life Well-Lived. The report analyzed data from surveying 323,500 adults in the United States. The goal of their report was to deliver "an in-depth perspective on what an ideal work culture for women looks like and what organizations can do to achieve that culture." (Gallop, 2016, p. 1) Understanding the overall culture in the United States and the roles and general expectations of women in society is important when establishing policies that ensure equality for women. Gallop's study focuses on examining the hours men and women spend, both working and outside of work, to understand and remedy disparities among male and female employees.

To begin, Gallop (2016) examines data overviewing the number of hours men report working versus women:

Gallop Survey Results

MEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN WOMEN TO WORK MORE THAN 40 HOURS PER WEEK

	MEN FULL TIME	WOMEN FULL TIME
Work 60 or more hours per week	**14%**	7%
Work 50-59 hours per week	**21%**	11%
Work 41-49 hours per week	**12%**	12%
Work 40 hours per week	47%	56%
Work less than 40 hours per week	7%	15%

Data do not account for occupation type or hourly vs. salary positions

They found “In the U.S. workforce, 47% of men say they work more than 40 hours per week, while 30% of women say the same” (Gallop, 2016, p. 34). However, they note this isn’t an indication of men working harder or being deserving of higher salaries, but that it is more likely women are more motivated to do more work in a shorter amount of time due to their outside obligations. Due to their obligations outside of work, women are likely to be using their time as efficiently as possible to ensure they succeed in their careers and at home. Women are often still considered to be the primary caregivers in the United States. According to BLS data Gallop used in their research, 85% of women report spending time taking care of household tasks every day, compared to only 67% of men. (Gallop, 2016) In order to achieve equality, employers need to be able to tie performance and pay to metrics and measurable goals; rather than based on who is putting in the most hours. Employers also need to recognize each person for their unique qualities and ensure all employees have the equal opportunity to reach their goals.

Gallop (2016) found that main contributors to women's engagement are flexibility and work-life balance. 60% of women surveyed rated work-life balance as "very important." Additionally, 53% of stay-at-home mothers sited work flexibility and hours as their main barrier to taking a job. Flexibility may look different from employer to employer based on the nature of the work or the financial flexibility the company has to implement these policies. However, it is important that within a particular organization these policies are available for all employees working on the same team. Flexibility can include accommodating hours, work-from-home options, and generous time-off policies. Companies may be concerned that these benefits promoting work-life balance will distract employees from prioritizing their work. However, having these benefits shouldn't inhibit the performance of employees, rather allow companies to recruit high-performing talent who will use these benefits responsibly while performing to their highest potential. Gallop (2016) explains that it is important that employees know what is expected of them at work when they are given these options and are held accountable to these expectations.

Examples of flexible hours may look like some employees coming in earlier if they need to leave work earlier to take care of children or allowing employees to work some of their required hours on the weekend or in the evenings. There might be occasions where an employee needs a few hours in the middle of the day to take care of personal obligations, but they are able to make those hours up in the afternoon. Additionally, some employees may find that working from home helps maintain a higher level of work-life balance. This may not mean working from home 100% of the time. Some employees may be able to come in and work several hours in the office before needing to leave to get children and complete the rest of their workday at home.

Employees also benefit from having ample time-off to take care personal needs, rest, and spend time clearing their heads. The study encourages employers to find a way to allow employees to tend to personal needs during business hours, within reason, without having to use valuable vacation time that may be limited. If employees are unable to use their vacation time to truly relax, they will be more prone to stress or burnout. Gallop (2016) explains that most employees want to do a good job and be there for their team, and in a healthy work-environment employees are unlikely to take advantage of generous time off polices, but rather use them to recharge in order to perform to their highest potential when they are working.

Gallop (2016) explains the significance of allowing these arrangements as long as they are reasonable and implemented across the team as to not single out anyone. For example, allowing only mothers to have flexible work arrangements may cause resentment among non-mothers who do not receive the same benefit. The work culture must also be one that nourishes transparency and trust. Employees must be able to express their needs and concerns without fear of retribution and feel they are being treated fairly. Gallop (2016) states managers should “recognize and reward people for great work and encourage team members to appreciate and understand one another's strengths and contributions — no matter what hours they work." (Gallop, 2016, p. 44)

Expanding on the principle of flexible schedules, companies should also review their family leave policies to ensure equal opportunity across the organization. In the past, women predominantly took the most time off after the birth of a child, and men took much less, if any. These trends have led to what researchers refer to as the "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood premium." Anderson (2018) describes the motherhood penalty as a reduction in women's wages due to their responsibilities in childbirth and childcare. "The motherhood penalty works through selecting specific women into motherhood, statistical discrimination of mothers in the labor market, and the human capital depreciation caused by time spent away from the labor market due to leave and the need for reduced or flexible work hours." (Anderson, 2018, p. 2). The author goes on to explain that when men become fathers their wages actually increase by 3% to 10%, otherwise known as the fatherhood premium. (Anderson, 2018) While there are many explanations for pay differences between mothers and fathers, perception in the workplace is likely a major attribute. For example, when companies have policies that allow for women to take off more time than men the perception may be that men work more or have a higher commitment to their jobs. Anderson (2018) observes that when men are able to take an equal number of weeks as their spouse, the result may "strengthen his relationship to the children, it increases the probability that parents share domestic responsibilities after the leave" (Anderson, 2018, p. 2). In other words, when men begin fatherhood by sharing in the childcare, they lessen the chance that their wives will suffer adverse consequences at work by being the main caregiver. This also allows companies to view men and women as equally important to their households.

Eaton and Jackson (2018) support the importance of leave equality and the impact for women:

> Research shows that hourly wages of mothers are approximately 5% lower relative to childless women, that they are 79% less likely to be interviewed and hired, and that they are offered lower wages when they are hired. Mothers are also half as likely to be promoted. However, when spouses take leave, a recent study found, women's salaries on average are approximately 7% higher for every month of leave men take. In fact, each month a father is on leave has a greater effect on maternal earnings than maternal leave does, according to that study. (Eaton & Jackson, 2018)

Eaton and Jackson (2018) believe that by offering equal leave opportunities to new parents, both mothers and fathers, companies are setting their employees up for "an even playing ground." These policies help women be viewed as equals in the workforce and also gives fathers the opportunity to spend more time adjusting to the changes in their household. This also helps deter biases in the workplace that may assume women will contribute less to their work than their male peers if they become pregnant or need to take care of children since the amount of time taken would be the same for either gender.

Additionally, their research found that companies also benefit when implementing equal leave policies. "According to studies in both Scotland and the U.S., fathers and parents of both sexes who received parental leave were more likely to stay with their companies.” (Eaton & Jackson, 2018) Bringing a new child into the family is a major upheaval for parents and implementing robust leave policies allows for adequate time to adjust and recoup before returning to work. In order for policies to be the most successful, company leadership must fully support men taking parental leave. Men and women must truly feel encouraged to utilize leave when it is available, and companies may even consider requiring employees to take their leave. “According to Mercer, only 26% of managers, globally, encourage men to take leave.” (Eaton & Jackson, 2018) The authors acknowledge that there is often a stigma for men when it pertains to taking time off to attend to their personal lives and may require extra encouragement. To mitigate this stigma companies may offer training on the benefits for parental leave and encourage their employees, especially leaders, to celebrate their time with their family. For women to gain the most benefit of these policies, men and leaders must also be taking advantage. If companies do not truly foster an organizational culture that values families, they will not be seen as sincere. The repercussions of this insincerity can lead to further adverse outcomes for women, such as not taking their own leave or leaving the workforce entirely due to lack of support.

Having a robust mentorship program can help companies not only recruit and retain talented women but grow them into higher level roles in their organization. The Center for Creative Leadership and Watermark identified in their 2017 study that women want opportunities to become leaders, be challenged in their work, and grow in their roles. (Clerkin, 2017) A mentor can help a women set goals for herself, build confidence, network with other professionals, and problem solve. Additionally, mentorship is mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee. According to a 2006

Gartner study on the value of mentoring; “Mentors were promoted six times more often than those not in the program; mentees were promoted five times more often than those not in the program; and retention rates were much higher for mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) than for employees who did not participate in the mentoring program (49%).” (Klein & Cappelli, 2007)

Formal mentorship programs can be complex and multifaceted. Therefore, in order for an organization to ensure their employees gain the most benefit, the program must be well executed. Human Resource leaders will need to define the goals of the program, train potential mentors, and have continuous oversight of how their mentor/mentee relationships are developing. Leaders of mentorship initiatives should see the process as fluid and be able to evolve with the needs of their employees and the organization.

Van Vianen et al. (2017) identifies several goals organizations may consider for their program. Among these are job satisfaction, employee retention, and skill-building. The researchers explain that these goals compliment one another. For example, if employees are being challenged and taught new skills by their mentors this can lead to higher job satisfaction and thus increase the likelihood of long-term employment. Additionally, using a mentorship program that allows more tenured employees to develop employees of less tenure, allows the company to have a wider range of talent and increases the availability of internal upward-movement for mentees. The researchers found that a combination of engagement, learning new skills, and being challenged at work correlated to higher employee retention. “Hence, organizations that combine individual career mentoring with a high-quality career mentoring climate are able to retain their talented employees. As a career mentoring climate also related to promotability, this positive climate will promote maintaining talented employees in particular." (Van Vianen et al., 2017, p. 12)

Human Resource leaders will next need to identify potential mentors within their organization. A mentor should be someone who can be identified as knowledgeable in the organization, represents the company's values, and is ideally recognized as someone well established in their career. When describing a mentor Klein (2007) states "Mentors also should have an understanding of the organization's values, culture and norms so they can pass these along to mentees. The mentor should be sensitive to the mentee's needs and wishes, and enhance the mentee's career potential." (Klein, 2007)

Furthermore, the organization should strive to have a diverse set of mentors available. A study conducted by Lankau et al. (2005) examined the relationships between mentors and mentees and the importance of having similar characteristics when building rapport. The success the of mentor/mentee relationship is dependent on the mentee being able to see the mentor as a role model. Moreover, the mentor needs to be able to connect with the mentee as they will need to invest a significant amount of time into developing their relationship. They cited that demographically diverse pairs may initially struggle to build this relationship. The researchers went on to describe the significance of the mentor understanding the importance of spending adequate time with their mentee. "Formal mentor program administrators should consider the requirement of activities that enable mentors and protégés in formal programs to spend time together (e.g., orientation sessions, workshops, Weld shadow days, and subsidized lunch programs)." (Lankau et al., 2005, p 12.) They found that when mentors and mentees invest more time together, the struggles they had in the initial stages of building rapport may change over time. This might be due to mentees coming to understand and appreciate the amount of time their mentor invested in their development. Additionally, when mentors begin to see the mentee grow in their role, the mentor is able to recognize the benefits of the time invested. Human Resource professionals should consider the amount of time needed when developing their mentor program and be sure to select mentors who have a sufficient amount of availability to invest in their mentor/mentee relationship.

When preparing prospective mentors to enter into the program, Human Resource professionals should emphasize the advantages for the mentor. Lin et al. (2021) focused their research on how effective mentorship programs impact the mentor specifically. They found that the opportunity to share knowledge and skills contributed to mentors finding an increased level of meaningfulness in their work. Mentors should also enter the relationship embracing the opportunity to further their own career development and be open to learning from their mentees. The mentorship allows for the mentor to develop interpersonal skills, develop empathy, and even learn more about different areas of the business when mentoring someone from a different department in the organization. (Lin et al., 2021)

Women experience unique struggles when building their careers and achieving self-confidence in their roles. Having a mentor to help them navigate through these struggles can reassure the mentee while they are finding their place and meeting their goals. Many people will gravitate toward a mentor relationship with someone they can relate to and view as a role model. While the mentee is still early in their career and establishing an identity for themselves their mentor can give them advice and encouragement as they were once in their position. According to Mysyk (2007) “mentoring has been used to describe relationships in which a more experienced advisor helps someone to successfully assume a new role, define a new identity, and integrate it with other identities.” (Mysyk, 2007, pp. 3-4)

The mentor’s primary responsibilities involve empowering and coaching their mentee. Because women’s careers often evolve differently than their male peers and their experiences are unique, researchers often find women may experience a greater benefit when given the opportunity to have a female mentor. Wallace (2001) reviewed mentor relationships for women and their career outcomes. She found that “female mentors may be best suited to prepare their female prot´eg´es for the unique sources of stress that women face in the workplace, such as discrimination, social isolation, and coping with work–family conflict.” (Wallace, 2001, p. 8) Female mentors may be more equipped to help their mentees prepare for these struggles due to similar experiences in their own career. This realistic preparation allows the mentee to plan for obstacles they may face and manage them in a way that will lead to better career outcomes. This is significant because women often cite that their main reason for leaving their career is due to their work-life struggles. Wallce (2001) findings were that women mentored by women have higher work-satisfaction and are more likely to remain in the workforce when mentored by a woman. “Female prot´eg´es benefit more from being mentored by women in terms of the four emotional outcomes examined in this study.” (Wallace, 2001, p.23)

Murrell et al. (2008) examined how formal mentoring programs impact the careers of people of color and the potential to enhance diversity in organizations. Their research was similar to the discoveries of Lankau et al. (2005) and Wallace (2001) in that they believe there are strong benefits for people with similarities, in this case race, to be paired in mentorship initiatives. They site that people with shared experiences are more likely to feel they can be honest when it comes to their needs, and in turn, are able to receive more honest feedback from their mentors. The researchers urge mentor program decision makers to “thoughtfully match mentees and mentors and to provide training for both mentoring partners.” (Murrell et al., 2008, p. 16)

The findings of Lankau et al. (2005), Murrell et al. (2008), and Wallace (2001) all identify the benefits of mentor/mentee pairs having demographic similarities. However, each researcher also acknowledged that organizations may struggle to find mentors with various demographic backgrounds. For this reason, Human Resource professionals must take a comprehensive approach to developing a mentor program. They should be aware of the possible implications of unsimilar pairings, but they can also recognize the unique benefits non-minority mentors bring to the table. For example, while Wallace (2001) cited that while women have higher work-satisfaction when mentored by woman, she also found women mentored by men have better financial outcomes, making approximately $14,020 more per year than those with female mentors. She theorizes that “the ideal situation then is to have both a male mentor who provides more instrumental career functions that result in higher earnings and a female mentor who better meets prot´eg´es’ emotional and personal needs.” (Wallace, 2001, p.21)

Murrell et al. (2008) research aligned with Wallace (2001) in recognizing there may be benefits for minority group mentees to have more than one mentor to help them meet their unique needs. “People of color often develop two complementary networks: one set of relationships with whites who may provide access to resources and opportunities, and another set of relationships with people of color who provide psychosocial and emotional support.” (Murrell et al., 2008, p. 15) In order to cumulate a diverse network of mentors Murrell et al. (2008) identifies that program coordinators may need to consider expanding their mentor program by developing relationships with other organizations and work together to form a robust network.

Lankau et al. (2005) advises that when struggling to create a diverse pool of mentors, Human Resource professionals should be diligent when conducting diversity training. “Training sessions for mentors that dispel stereotypes about cross-gender and cross-race relationships may help alleviate concerns or hesitation about fostering a strong interpersonal relationship within demographically diverse pairs.” (Lankau et al., 2005, p 12.) In addition to diversity training, Human Resource professionals can evaluate other characteristics like education, age, or career traits to match potential participants and promote a bond. Lankau et al. (2005) also showed more positive relationships between mentors and mentees when they are in different departments. Using this knowledge, mentor program coordinators can work to use multiple characteristics to foster a compatible mentor/mentee relationship.

By reviewing the research Human Resource professionals can begin to create a successful mentorship program. The team should create goals to maintain focus on their initiatives and be knowledgeable on the concepts presented to prepare for roadblocks. They can use their goals to form mentor pairs which mutually benefit each party and use a comprehensive approach to training in order to prepare mentors for their roles. Additionally, in organizations striving to expand their diversity, teams should not be discouraged if their workforce does not enable their initial mentor group to be robustly diverse. This step is only part of the process in creating a company culture of equality and inclusion.

In addition to work-life balance and mentorship, Gallop (2016) found that women look for an organizational culture that can offer them career equality. Companies can cultivate an organizational culture that promotes equality by reducing biases, reviewing compensation practices, and ensuring a workplace culture where employees can thrive. These initiatives need to be intentional policies that help organizations achieve diversity where everyone has equal opportunity for success.

Unconscious biases are defined as “prejudices we have but are unaware of.” (McCormick, 2016, p. 2) These biases are assumptions people have toward others due to things like sex, race, or disabilities. Acknowledging that biases exist in every organization is an important first step towards mitigating discrimination and increasing diversity. McCormick (2016) urges Human Resource professionals to ask themselves “To what extent are our organizational culture and business results being affected by unconscious bias?” (McCormick, 2016, p. 2) These biases can impact everything in the organization from hiring decisions, promotions, performance reviews, and even terminations. Once an organization accepts the biases in their culture, they can take important steps to improve their processes going forward.

Human Resource professionals can take the steps towards ensuring equal career opportunities by evaluating their recruiting and hiring practices. Studies have found that minorities face disadvantages in the hiring process due to certain identifiers on their resumes, such as their name, college, or zip code. These identifiers have shown to trigger biases regardless of the persons qualifications or experience. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) conducted an experiment to assess how much a person's name could impact the likelihood of getting a callback from a perspective employer. They responded to over 1300 job ads in Chicago and Boston with approximately 5000 resumes with applicant names that many would identify as being traditionally "white" or "black" with varying levels of experience. They found "White applicants are 49 percent more likely than African-American applicants to receive a callback in Chicago and 50 percent more likely in Boston." (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004, p. 8) Being aware of how the organization is currently screening candidates can help Human Resource professionals implement practices to mitigate biases in the hiring process.

One technique Human Resource professionals may consider implementing is the practice of scrubbing resumes or applications for identifying information such as name, address, college attended, or other factors that may identify that a person is a minority. Bortz (2019) described this practice as "blind hiring" and analyzed several companies to help identify best practices for organizations. He reinforces that this practice "can help get diverse candidates past an initial screen" but is "one tool in a bigger diversity and inclusion (D&I) toolbox." (Bortz, 2019) Eventually the candidate will be interviewed, and their identity will no longer be anonymous. Therefore, "blind hiring" should be thought of as a screening tool to ensure diverse candidates have an equal opportunity of making it to the interview process. Once an applicant makes it past the screening process, Human Resource professional must have other tools to continue to help combat biases. Bortz (2019) explains that interviews should be focused on a candidate's skills.

Managers should have a list of skill-based questions they will ask each applicant to encourage equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. This practice should prevent managers from asking candidates different screening questions due to their own assumptions of the candidate based on their race or gender.

Implementing a training curriculum to educate the organization on biases in the workplace is a crucial part of diversity initiatives. Many programs begin by working to destigmatize the fact that everyone has unconscious biases. Kim and Roberson (2022) explain that biases are part of human nature, and in order for people to change their behavior they must first recognize their own feelings of bias. The researchers observed the bias training curriculum of six large companies, including Google, to identify best practices for conducting successful bias training that yields long-term results. Kim and Roberson (2022) quoted Google's presentation which begins by stating "I'm biased, and so are you." The researchers noted that each of the trainings they observed had a similar message. They continued by explaining that when people accept that everyone has biases, the are less likely to become defensive and be able to accept the training.

Kim and Roberson (2022) emphasize that the point of the training is not to normalize biases, as this can possibly lead to a lack of incentive for people to identify and change their behavior. Rather, the message should be self-awareness of biased behaviors and the motivation to reduce these behaviors. When reviewing the exercises Microsoft, Google, and PwC conducted to help their employees with self-awareness they found "All three suggest questioning one's first impressions of an individual. Microsoft further suggests that having a strong reaction to someone can be a clue that your biases are involved and a cue to slow down and monitor your thoughts." (Kim &

Roberson, 2022, p. 5) The researchers go on to explain that after a person is able to begin to recognize when they are having biased thoughts, the next step is learning how to replace those thoughts The example they described was that some people associate Asians with being good at math. When thoughts like this occur, a self-ware person should be able to recognize that this is a biased assumption. They suggest replacing this thought with something unbiased like “She's Asian, but that doesn’t tell me anything about her strengths” (Kim & Roberson, 2022, p. 6) They explain that overtime, using this exercise to combat internal biases will lead to the unbiased thought being more dominant than the biased one.

Formal performance appraisal programs should also be evaluated for signs of implicit bias in the workplace. These appraisals are often key in organizations for evaluating employee performance and making compensation decisions. Correll et al. (2020) evaluated how gender impacts the manager perception when evaluating employees. Their analysis included 208 performance evaluations from a technology company is Silicon Valley. Correll et al. (2020) found employees are often evaluated on their personalities or behaviors, and biases often play a role because men and women are often expected to behave in certain ways. For example, they found “10 percent of women’s evaluations mentioned the employee was too aggressive in her communication style, compared to only 3.9 percent of men’s evaluations.” (Correll et al., 2020, p. 16) This is consistent with the gender bias that men are expected to have “high-status behaviors” and women should not. They also found that men with top ratings were more likely to have verbiage that mentions promotion opportunities, while none of the top-rated women had this verbiage in their review. (Correll et al., 2020)

They go on to explain how this language and perception is subjective and can vary based on the persons gender or relationship with their managers, but once the performance reviews are written they are often viewed as objective, and impact long-term career growth and compensation. Based on their research the authors recommend companies strive to reduce “ambiguity and uncertainty” and instead “create clear criteria” that allows managers to rate employees based on objectives and goals which reduces the probability of employees be rated based on biased perceptions. (Correll et al., 2020)

Castilla (2015) studied performance-based reward systems and how accountability and transparency in the process can lead to better outcomes for organizational diversity and inclusion. The author analyzed the performance-based pay decisions for approximately 9,000 employees between 1996 and 2003. She found a “small but significant gap in the distribution of performance-based rewards: specifically, women, ethnic minorities, and non-U.S.- born employees received lower monetary rewards relative to U.S.-born white men having the same performance evaluation scores.” (Castilla, 2015 p. 2) The author found a lack of formalization in the company’s process and identified that there were no procedures in place to hold decision-makers accountable for their pay decisions. She also explained how a lack of transparency for managers into pay disparities in the workplace makes it difficult for managers to know or remedy these disparities. Castilla (2015) met with key decision makers at the organization in 2004 and made recommendations to address the lack of transparency and accountability in their processes. In turn, the organization took several steps to change their process including implementing a committee to review pay decisions and providing data to certain leaders on their employees pay and demographics. Castilla (2015) returned to reevaluate the company's data after implementing these changes and reviewed the performance-based rewards system for year 2005-2009. She found "After the new organizational measures were adopted, the magnitudes of the demographic effects were reduced and became insignificant in predicting pay increases in this company." (Castilla, 2015, p. 18)

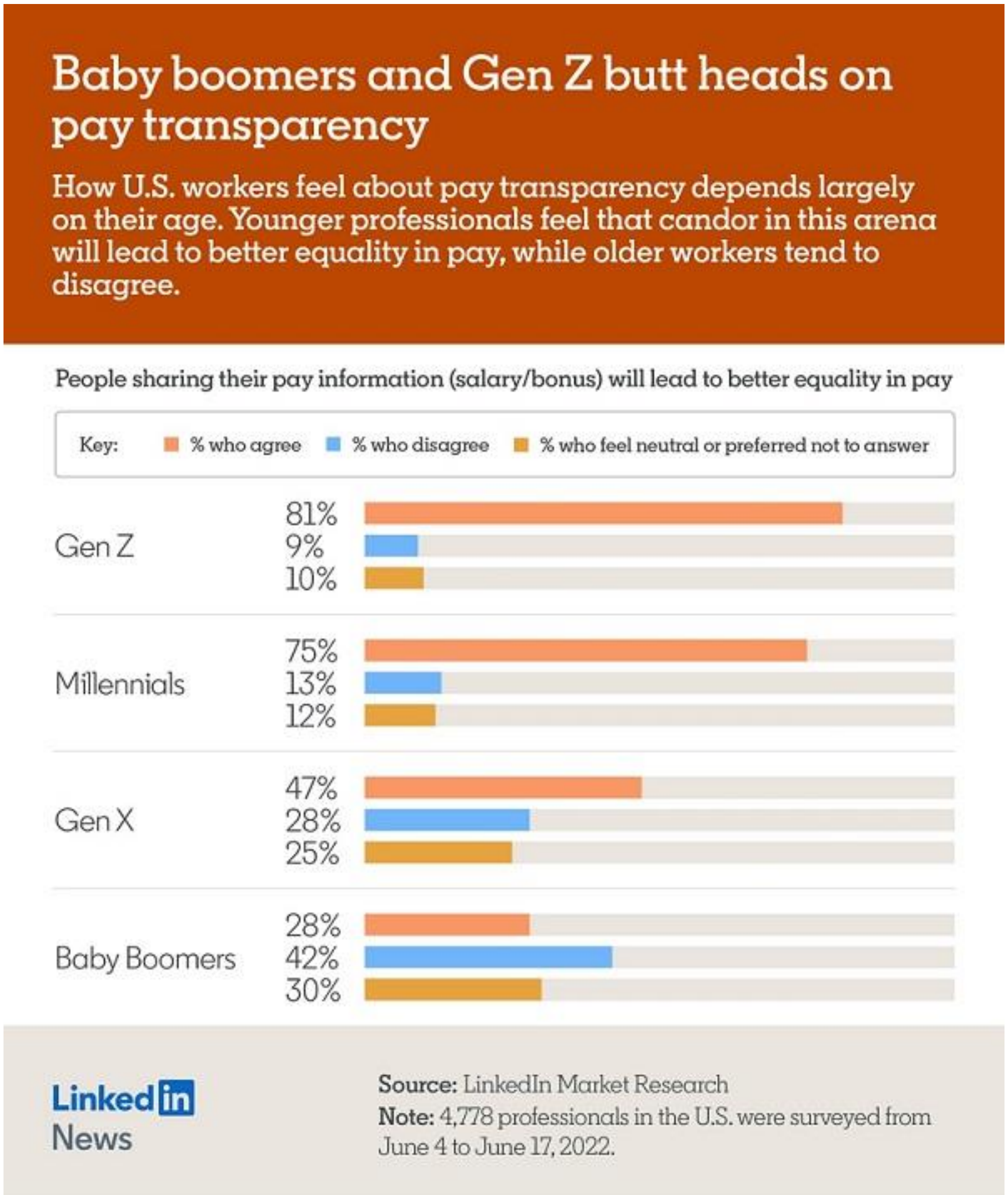
Castilla's (2015) description of transparency in compensation practices are relatively conservative, only pushing for leaders to have further insight to pay disparities. However, the push for pay transparency throughout an organization is becoming more common as society strives for pay equity. Pay transparency can either refer to employers being open about pay related information such as job leveling or pay ranges within certain positions, or employees being open with each other about their own salaries and compensation. In his article "Increasing pay transparency: A guide for change" Heisler (2021) describes increasing transparency for employees:

> "The first step in enhancing transparency is to ensure that all employees are informed of the pay grades for their jobs. This disclosure should also include the salaries or wage ranges for jobs falling within that pay grade. With this information, employees can locate where their pay falls within their pay grade. With increased transparency at the pay-process level, they will also be aware of the factors that resulted in their pay being where it is within the grade (i.e., above or below the midpoint). (Heisler, 2021, p. 5)

Heisler (2021) goes on to explain companies should ensure employees are not at risk of adverse action if they choose to discuss their salaries with one another. The right for employees to discuss their salaries among themselves is protected under the National Labor Relations Act, and it is illegal for companies to discriminate against employees who choose to do so. Heisler (2021) explains that increasing transparency in compensation practices encourages open communication for employees to understand where they are in their paygrades and how they can improve their circumstances. Additionally, he believes pay transparency is an integral part of an organization's culture and values "such as honesty and integrity, trust in leadership, fairness, diversity, or respect for others." (Heisler, 2021 p. 8)

Employers should be aware that employees, especially younger generations, are likely to discuss pay among themselves, and a lack of pay transparency could lead to distrust in the organization. Likely due to growing up in the world of social media, when surveyed, Gen Z workers are the most likely to share their salary details. In a survey conducted by LinkedIn's Workforce Confidence, 81% of Gen Z believe that sharing pay information will lead to better equality in pay. In the same survey 34% of Gen Zers voted they would share their salary with anyone who asks. (Anders, 2022) In another survey conducted in March of 2022 by Bankrate, 70% of Gen Zers advocated for themselves in their career (such as asked for a raise or more flexibility) between February of 2021 and February of 2022, compared to only 29% of Baby Boomers. (Foster, 2022) Ensuring employees understand the company's performance review and compensation practices can assist employers as demographics shift and Gen Zers enter the workforce.

LinkedIn Survey Results:



The most recent challenge for companies striving to make gains in workplace equality for women is the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. The International Labour Organization cites that globally, female employment declined by 4.2% in 2020 compared to 2019, whereas male employment declined 3%. (International Labour Organization, 2021) Since women are often considered the main caretakers in their household, it makes sense they would be the most impacted by things like childcare issues and health concerns. One of the major conflicts to employment during the Covid pandemic is feelings of burn-out from employed parents. Employer behaviors toward their employees during the pandemic are shown to have an impact in the engagement and health of their employees. According to one McKinsey study “73% of parents with symptoms of burnout report that the demands of their work interfere with their private and family life.” (Coe et al., 2022, p. 4) Additionally, 90% of these parent’s report feelings that their employer is more invested in work productivity than their mental health. Coe et al. (2022) found that flexibility was the most impactful benefit to parents and non-parents during the pandemic. The long-term impacts of the Covid pandemic are still being studied, however, employers can continue to strive for equality by offering support to their employees and staying informed on trends in the market and in their communities.

Conclusion

Society has made gains towards women’s equality in the last century; however, more work is needed for women to have equal career opportunities. Legislation for equality is continuing to evolve, and organizations can do their part by cultivating an inclusive culture. Focusing on creating a climate where all employees feel included and heard will help employers implement these initiatives. Additionally, it is crucial companies are dedicated to the needs of women in their organizations and stay current on social trends that may impact their workforce.

Further research is needed to thoroughly understand unique challenges that impact women's careers. Women who face additional biases at work due to their race, sexual orientation, or disability status may require support other than has been presented here. Moreover, women in particular fields may have unique challenges that employers should evaluate and address within their particular organizations. Reviewing past and current research can help companies understand the roles they play in the success for women in their organizations.

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