

Social Psychological Perspectives of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion in National and Global Contexts

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The recent focus on diversity in the management literature takes on special urgency in the context of human services organizations. Human services organizations have traditionally served a wide array of communities with a high representation of diverse, disadvantaged, and oppressed groups. This diversity has not typically been mirrored in the workforce of those organizations. A recent study of a nationally representative sample of 10,000 social workers demonstrates that the profession is not keeping pace with the population it serves in terms of its ability to attract social workers of color (National Association of Social Workers, 2005). The study's findings indicate that 86% of licensed social workers are predominantly non-Hispanic whites. Both African Americans and Latinos are underrepresented relative to their

presence in the U.S. population, with 7% African American social workers, compared to 12% in the population, and 4% Latinos, compared to 14% in the population. This workforce data stands in contrast to the social workers' reports about the diversity of their client population: 83% report having black/African American clients in their caseloads and 75% report having Hispanic/Latino clients. In the field of child protective services, agencies have been recruiting professionals outside of social work in order to increase the presence of underrepresented groups in their workforce (Clark & Jacquet, 2003).

Despite advancement in the representation of women and members of minority groups in the human services workforce, there is still a lot to be done to make the workplace more inclusive. The extent to which workers from diverse

backgrounds feel included in the organization may have a direct bearing on their job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Mor Barak, 2000a). As a result, this sense of inclusion or exclusion as well as the overall organizational culture and climate may influence the quality of services that workers provide to their clients (Glisson & Himmelfarn, 1998; Glisson & James, 2002) as well as the workers' health, mental health, and social functioning (McNeely, 1992).

Managers of human services organizations often assume that because their workers' education includes sensitivity to and efficacy in dealing with diverse clients, they should also be skilled in dealing with diversity among their peers, subordinates, and supervisors. This, however, may not necessarily be the case. In an interview I conducted in preparation for a large organizational diversity study, a manager recounted how disappointed she was when she had to reprimand one of her workers for making an offensive remark to a colleague from a different ethnic background. The manager noted that the worker "should have known better; after all, he is an experienced social worker!"

How can we explain both overt and covert incidents of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, particularly among trained human services professionals? What dynamics dictate intergroup relations? How can we explain conflicts and hostilities among identity groups? The goal of this chapter is to address these questions by exploring social psychological theories of diversity and exclusion. The notion of exclusion can assist in generating a conceptual framework to clarify our understanding of the personal and organizational consequences of workforce diversity in human services organizations.

This chapter is organized into five major sections: (1) background and a definition for diversity in work organizations; (2) exploring some theoretical building blocks—prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion; (3) analyzing theories of diversity and intergroup relations relevant to human services organizations; (4) presenting research evidence on diversity and exclusion; and (5) examining the implications for human services management.

Background and Diversity Definition

In recent decades, many countries around the world, including the U.S., have made significant progress, through legislation and public policies, toward creating a more equitable work environment (Mor Barak, 2005). The combination of antidiscrimination laws and affirmative action programs have helped more women, members of ethnic and racial minorities, gays and lesbians, older workers, the differently abled, and members of other marginalized groups become part of the labor force. Despite progress in increasing the *representation* of diverse groups in work organization, it is the *exclusion* of these groups from circles of influence in the organization that keeps them from fully contributing to, and benefiting from, their involvement in the workplace.

The definition of diversity commonly used in the organizational literature refers to specific categories of human differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability (see, e.g., Bloom, 2002; Muller & Parham, 1998). However, with increased immigration and worker migration fueled by the global economy, the number and types of groups who are marginalized and discriminated against in the workplace continue to increase. Generating a definition of workforce diversity that will be relevant and applicable in various cultural and national contexts proves to be a challenge. It is important to remember that workforce diversity *is not* about the anthropological differences between people that "make them special"; diversity *is* about belonging to groups that are different from whatever is considered "mainstream" in society. In short, it is about being susceptible to employment consequences as a result of one's association within or outside certain social groups.

Some scholars advocate focusing only on the categories that have been most persistently associated with negative employment consequences across cultural and national contexts (Essed, 1996; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Nkomo, 2001). They specifically identify race, gender, and social class as the fundamental diversity categories. For

example, Nkomo (2001) asserts that the most fundamental divisions in organizations are along the lines of race, gender, and class and that diversity work must be about ending the domination of these systems of oppression. As another example, Linnehan and Konrad (1999) declare that including many distinct groups in the definition of diversity ends up diminishing the emphasis on intergroup inequality and undermining historical and institutional problems related to stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantage.

There are some general distinction categories that do seem to cut across many (though not all) national and local cultures. These include gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and disability. However, there are two problems in utilizing some of these categories to define diversity: First, some of the categories may have either positive or negative impact on employment and job prospects in different countries. For example, in Western cultures, younger employees are considered more desirable because they are perceived to have new ideas, better technological skills, and a more dynamic and flexible attitude. In Eastern and more traditional societies, such as in China and Korea, the old are revered and believed to possess desirable qualities of wisdom and experience. Therefore, although age discrimination may be relevant in both types of societies, its impact might be very different. And, second, diversity distinction categories are not exhaustive of the domain. Some cultures utilize diversity categories that are not included on this list. For example, religious affiliation in Ireland, regional location (rural vs. urban) in China, and caste in India are powerful diversity categories that are not included in the list.

Perhaps the logical solution to the difficulty of finding a universal definition for diversity that can be relevant in different cultural contexts is to define diversity not by naming specific categories or finding a general rule but by identifying the process and the consequences of diversity.¹ Therefore, the definition of workforce diversity utilized in this chapter is as follows:

Workforce diversity refers to the division of the workforce into distinction categories

that (a) have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context, and that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, and promotion prospects—irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications. (Mor Barak, 2005, p. 132)

This definition provides a broad umbrella that includes any categories that may be relevant to specific cultural or national environments without pre-specifying the categories. This approach does not list the distinction categories and therefore does not limit them to specific categories (e.g., to only gender, race, and ethnicity), thus allowing the inclusion of categories that may be relevant in some cultural contexts and not in others (e.g., castes or regional differences). Additionally, this definition emphasizes the importance of the workplace-related *consequences* of diversity. What are the main adverse consequences of the diversity distinction categories? Prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion are all constructs that describe attitudes and behaviors that affect the distribution of resources and privileges in society. They are based on group membership rather than on employment-related characteristics (e.g., level of education, commitment, and job-related skills) and are used as building blocks in the construction of theories relevant to diversity and intergroup relations, as discussed below.

Theoretical Building Blocks: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Exclusion

This section examines several constructs that are often used to express psychological processes and actual behaviors involved in intergroup relations. These constructs are defined as “mechanisms by which advantaged and disadvantaged group members perceive and interpret interactions that appear to be based on their category membership rather than on their individual characteristics” (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p. 159). At the basis of both

intergroup attitudes and behaviors are the diversity (or group affiliation) categories used to make the distinction between the advantaged and the disadvantaged in each society. These constructs are helpful in clarifying central aspects of diversity in organizations that could lead to the dominance or advantage of one group over another and, therefore, are central to the construction of theories.

Stereotyping and Prejudice

Often confused, stereotyping and prejudice refer to very distinct psychological processes. All of us hold stereotypical views of groups other than our own and often about our own group as well. For example, “Latino families maintain close relationships”; “Asian-American students excel in math and sciences”; “Women are more attentive to human emotions.” These stereotypes serve a very practical function. Rather than starting with no information when we encounter a person from another group, we begin with a framework that gives us a sense of confidence that we know something about the other. Stereotypes are, therefore, a *mental impression* that we form about members of other groups. Although the concept originated to denote negative images of other groups, recent research demonstrates that they could be both positive and negative (McGregor & Gray, 2002; Slabbert, 2001). For example, having closely knit families is typically perceived as a positive attribute, but when it is perceived as a common characteristic of *all* Latino families, it constitutes a stereotype.

The concept of prejudice, on the other hand, refers to people’s *attitudes* toward members of other groups—expecting certain behaviors from them that are mostly pejorative. The word *prejudice*, derived from the Latin noun *praejudicium*, means to prejudge. Although it is possible to have positive prejudice as well—that is, to think well about others without sufficient justification (e.g., reverence for the wisdom of the elderly)—the word *prejudice* has acquired a negative connotation. Prejudice is typically described as a schema

of negative evaluations and characteristics that are attributed to groups perceived as racially and culturally different (Essed, 1995, p. 45). For example, in a study of interethnic perceptions, Gilbert, Carr-Ruffino, Ivancevich, and Lownes-Jackson (2003) found that African American males were more likely to be viewed as incompetent and not as courteous as African American women and Asian American women and men. This was despite having similar job-related qualifications and history.

The following definitions summarize the distinctions between a stereotype and a prejudice:

A *stereotype* is a standardized, oversimplified, and typically negative mental picture held by a person or persons about members of another group and sometimes about their own group as well.

A *prejudice* is a preconceived judgment or opinion held by members of a group; most commonly it is an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics. (Based on Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, pp. 159–166)

Discrimination in the Workplace

Negative stereotypes and prejudices make it easier to relate to the other person as different and unworthy of equal rights and treatment. The most extreme psychological mechanism in perceiving members of other groups as inferior is dehumanization, and its behavioral manifestation is oppression. Oppression is the unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power, most often used by one group to dominate another. The psychological process involved in the justification of such practices includes relating to out-group members as inferior or fundamentally different in ways that make them undeserving of equal treatment.

The word *discrimination* is generally neutral in its meaning (e.g., referring to someone as “having a discriminating taste”), but it has a clear

negative connotation when applied to the context of employment and is defined as follows:

Discrimination in employment and consumer relations occurs when (a) individuals, institutions, or governments treat people differently because of personal characteristics such as race, gender, or sexual orientation rather than their ability to perform their jobs; and (b) these actions have a negative impact on access to jobs, promotions, or compensation.² (Mor Barak, 2005, p. 141)

Around the world, gender has been one of the most commonly used criteria for discrimination in the workplace. The logic used to justify discrimination against women has relied on perceptions of a difference in their “destiny” in life and has often cited religious justification. Consider the following statement made by Justice Joseph P. Bradley when the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a case by a woman who could not become a lawyer simply because of her gender: “The paramount mission and destiny of women are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the creator” (Joseph P. Bradley, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, 1873).³ One hundred years later, Japan’s Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, made a similar statement: “First of all, I want women, as mothers, to become 100 percent wonderful mothers. Then I want them to become good wives. And I want them to become ladies capable of making contributions for society also” (Japan Times, 1984).⁴

Members of ethnic and national minorities have been frequent victims of discrimination. A multinational study conducted by the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) found that discrimination against migrant and ethnic minority job applicants was widespread (Zegers de Beijl, 1999). The average discrimination rates (i.e., discrimination incidents per application relative to the number of job applications) in the countries studied were around 35%. The study documented that discrimination occurred in each stage of the job application

process: during the inquiry stage (minority applicants were told that the job has been filled, when in reality it was not), the job interview (minority applicants were asked for more qualifications than other applicants), and during the job offer (minority applicants were offered inferior salary and benefits). A particularly interesting facet of this study was that it was able to pinpoint the stage during which discrimination had occurred. Most of the direct discriminatory rejections occurred at the first stage of the application process, resulting in these applicants being denied the opportunity to present their credentials. In other words, the discrimination occurred as soon as the applicants introduced themselves using foreign names that were not typical of their country of residence.

The Inclusion-Exclusion Continuum

One of the most significant problems facing today’s diverse workforce is exclusion, both the reality experienced by many and the perception of even greater numbers of employees that they are *not* viewed by management as an integral part of the organization (Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1992; Mor Barak, 2000b). The inclusion-exclusion continuum is central to the discussion here and is defined below:⁵

The concept of *inclusion-exclusion* in the workplace refers to the individual’s sense of being a part of the organizational system in both the formal processes, such as access to information and decision-making channels, and the informal processes, such as social gatherings and lunch meetings, where information exchange and decisions informally take place. (Mor Barak, 2005, p. 149)

The concept of inclusion-exclusion is an indicator of the way employees experience and perceive their position in the organization relative to its “mainstream.” Sometimes the experience of exclusion is blatant. For example, an interviewee

in one of my studies, the only woman in a team of engineers, shared with me her experience of not being invited to several team meetings and, when she complained, being told that these were “just informal gatherings, you didn’t really need to be there.” At other times the experience is more subtle. Another interviewee, an African American social worker in a large human services organization, indicated that she was always “the last to know” about things that were happening in the organization.

Though diversity distinction categories vary from one culture or country to the next, the common factor that seems to transcend cultural and national boundaries is the experience of exclusion, particularly in the workplace. Individuals and groups are implicitly or explicitly excluded from job opportunities, information networks, team membership, human resource investments, and the decision-making process because of their actual or perceived membership in a minority or disfavored identity group.

Yet, inclusion in organizational information networks and in decision-making processes has been linked to better job opportunities and career advancement in work organizations (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; O’Leary & Ickovics, 1992), as well as to job satisfaction and well-being (Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). Some scholarly work, though clearly not enough, has examined the interaction between diversity distinction categories, such as race/ethnicity and gender, pointing to the compounding complexity of understanding racial prejudice when entangled with sexism (Bell, 1990, 1992). Research indicates that racial and ethnic minority women commonly believe they are excluded from the organizational power structure and have the least access to organizational resources from among disfavored groups (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Similarly, a study of six county welfare departments found that African American women were paid less and had lower occupational rank compared to other workers, controlling for other job-related characteristics (McNeely, Sapp, & Daly, 1998). Employees’

experience and sense of exclusion, therefore, may play a critical role in explaining both their lack of job opportunities and dissatisfaction with their jobs, respectively.

Theories of Diversity and Intergroup Relations

The global trends of immigration and worker migration, coupled with diversity legislation and affirmative action social policies advancements, underscore the need to examine theories that were conceived in different parts of the world and to generate an integrated approach to understanding workforce diversity and intergroup relations. There are several major theories of intergroup relations that are relevant to human services organizations (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994), including *realistic conflict theory* (RCT), an economic theory that assumes that people act in self-interest and, therefore, intergroup conflicts are caused by people’s drive to maximize their own or their group’s rewards to the detriment of other groups’ interests (Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1953); *equity theory*, which emphasizes that people strive for justice and view perceptions of injustice as the cause of personal distress and intergroup conflict (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978; Adams, 1965); and *relative deprivation theory*, a theory that focuses on perceptions of inequality between people’s access to resources and that of others in the society, resulting in intergroup conflicts and oppression (Crosby, 1976; Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949). A fourth theory that explains intergroup relations, *social identity theory*, stands out as a mega-theory that can explain the universal effects of social categorization and group membership regardless of the specific type of group. It is this all-embracing orientation of social identity theory that makes it relevant for the study of diversity in human services organizations. The next section describes social identity theory and its usefulness as a tool for explaining exclusion and discrimination in the context of human services organizations.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY: CENTRAL PROPOSITIONS RELEVANT TO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

- People desire to belong to groups that enjoy *distinct* and *positive* identities.
- Social identification with certain groups leads to activities that are congruent with the group's collective identity and that foster stereotypical perceptions of self and others.
- Through *social comparisons* between the in-group and out-group, in-group members will make an effort to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group in some dimensions.
- The mere categorization of individuals, either voluntary or assigned, is all that is necessary to create in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.
- Those who belong to groups with higher perceived social status will accept and *include* people they consider to be like them, while *excluding* and *discriminating against* those they perceive to be different from them.

SOURCE: Based on Tajfel (1978); Tajfel and Turner (1986); Turner (1987).

Social Identity Theory—Explaining Workplace Exclusion and Discrimination

Social identity theory is a cognitive social psychological theory that originated in Europe and gained popularity in North America and in other regions of the world. It provides the connection between social structures and individual identity through the meanings people attach to their membership in identity groups, such as those formed by race, ethnicity, or gender (Tajfel, 1982). The theory postulates that people tend to classify themselves into social categories that have meaning for them, and this shapes the way individuals interact with others from their own identity group and from other groups (Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987).

The central propositions of the theory are noted in the box above.

Social identity is defined as the individual's knowledge that he or she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him or her of the group membership (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Social identity stems from the categorization of individuals, the distinctiveness and prestige of the group, the salience

of out-groups, and the factors that traditionally are associated with group formation. Most important, and most relevant to the present discussion, social identification leads to activities that are congruent with the group's collective identity, that support institutions that embody their identity, and that foster stereotypical perceptions of self and others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

A person's identity has two components: a personal component that is derived from idiosyncratic characteristics—such as personality, physical, and intellectual traits—and a social component derived from salient commonalities derived from group memberships, such as race, sex, class, and nationality (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1982). Social identity is a perception of oneness with a group of persons (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Sometimes, however, this perception of oneness is the result of being categorized by the larger society as members of a particular group. For example, despite their distinct cultural heritage and complex historical relationships, individuals who emigrate from countries such as Korea, China, and Japan are “lumped” into one group known as “Asian” when they live in the U.S. The differences between these individuals who come from very different countries,

backgrounds, and histories are overlooked, with any uniqueness misunderstood at best (Fowler, 1996). However, over the years, individuals from these countries, and particularly the children of these immigrants, have developed a sense of identity that is tied to being Asian Americans.

Social comparison is the process that people use to evaluate themselves by comparing their group's membership with other groups. The basic hypothesis is that pressures to positively evaluate one's own group through in-group/out-group comparisons lead social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some relevant dimension.

An important aspect of social identity theory that is most relevant to this discussion is the focus on *social categorization* and its connection to *intergroup discrimination*. Social categorization is a cognitive tool that is used to "segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social actions" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, pp. 15–16). Social categories include groups such as women, Catholics, social workers, gays, and managers. Although categorization may serve to simplify the world, people are complex because of differences in values and norms, as well as one's own group identification, and these differences may influence social categorization. As a result, social categories most often do not fit individuals' sense of who they are. For example, with the increased interracial and interethnic marriages in recent decades, there is a growing awareness that racial and ethnic identification often do not conform to the categories used by social institutions in the past. A person born to an African American mother and a Caucasian father may identify herself as belonging to both groups but, depending on her dominant features, others are more likely to categorize her as belonging to one race or to the other. The mere categorization of individuals and the creation of in-group and out-group is sufficient, according to social identity theory, for discrimination to

occur (for a schematic diagram of social identity theory's basic principles, please see Figure 11.1). Research that examined this proposition showed that even in a minimal group situation experiment (individuals were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, membership was anonymous, and criteria for social categorization were not linked to rewards to be allocated among the groups), people tended to discriminate against members of out-groups simply because they belonged to a different social category (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994).

An important limitation of social identity theory that is particularly relevant to the discussion here is the theory's very broad and rather generic view of social categories. Because the theory treats all types of categories as equal, it cannot account for the heightened significance of diversity categories such as race, gender, and class in many cultures and nations due to their deep historical roots in both the Western world and in previously colonized countries. Social identity theory conceptualizes identity primarily as self-defined. It, therefore, downplays the consequences of other groups defining individuals and affecting their sense of inclusion or exclusion.

Research on Diversity and Exclusion

The universal human need to be included in social systems has its roots in the way people have traditionally satisfied their basic needs. Because human beings have always depended on cooperation and collaboration with one another for their basic needs (food, shelter, clothing), they are motivated to maintain connections with significant people and social systems in their lives. On the other hand, competition for scarce resources forced people to identify themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups. Being included in a group was central to survival, and sense of inclusion in a group became central to individuals' self-esteem. As a result, self-esteem functions as a psychological gauge, or "sociometer," a

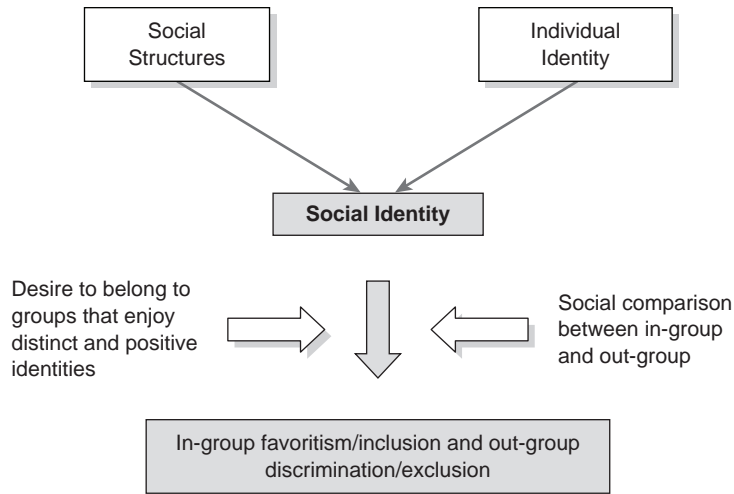


Figure 11.1 A Schematic Diagram of Social Identity Theory's Basic Principles

personal indicator that allows people to monitor inclusion or exclusion reactions toward them from their environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Schreindorfer, & Haupt, 1995). Triggered by an environment that is exclusionary, threats to one's self-esteem produce behavioral outcomes that are aimed at rectifying the situation by, for example, compensatory efforts to assimilate or disengaging from the exclusionary system and linking with a more inclusive environment.

Research indicates that individuals from diverse groups commonly find themselves excluded from networks of information and opportunity (Cox, 1994; Ibarra, 1993). The reasons are varied. First, overt or covert racism, sexism, ageism, or other forms of discrimination may be the motivation for exclusionary practices. Second, economic self-interest can be the motivation for preventing certain individuals or groups from gaining access to power and economic resources (Larkey, 1996; Morrison, 1992). And, third, prevalent stereotypical perceptions and a general sense of discomfort with those who are perceived as different can be the reason for excluding persons from important

organizational processes and resources (Vonk & Van Knippenberg, 1995). These processes increase the likelihood of exclusion of those who are different (i.e., women, ethnic and racial minorities, and members of groups that may be stereotypically defined or labeled as different).

Research on organizational demography indicates that being in the minority has significant effects on individuals' affective experiences in the workplace, including feelings of isolation and lack of identification in one-on-one relationships (Ely, 1994; Ibarra, 1995; Mor Barak et al., 1998). Milliken and Martins (1996) indicate a strong and consistent relationship between diversity in gender, ethnicity, and age and exclusion from important workplace interactions. One of the most frequently reported problems faced by women and minorities in organizational settings is their limited access to, or exclusion from, informal and yet vital interaction networks (Miller, 1986; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). For example, Bell and Nkomo (2001) note that an important barrier experienced by black women is limited access to informal and social networks in their organizations. The African American women they interviewed

felt they had less access to these networks in their organizations than did white men and white women. As a result, they felt cut off from important organizational information and less accepted as full members of the organization. Many of the women spoke of the critical importance of informal networks, including mentorship, sponsorship, and assistance from co-workers, in career advancement. Similarly, the white women managers also believed that exclusion from the “old boy network” was one of the barriers to women’s advancement (pp. 152–153). Similar results were found in human services organizations as well, where women and minorities, particularly African American women, are more likely than other employees to occupy the lowest-ranking positions (Dressel, 1987; Gibelman & Schervish, 1993; Martin & Chernesky, 1989; McNeely, 1992).

These networks allocate a variety of instrumental resources that are critical for job effectiveness and career advancement, as well as expressive benefits such as social support and friendship (Ibarra, 1993). Although women and members of minority groups have made some inroads into traditional non-minority male job domains, organizational jobs remain largely structured along race, gender, and class lines, with the more meaningful and prestigious jobs being held by men of the dominant group and of higher social echelons (Beggs, 1995; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; McNeely, Blakemore, & Washington, 1993). Research has demonstrated that the extreme overrepresentation of white men in organizational positions of authority may have a negative impact on women and nonwhite subordinates. For example, women in male-dominated organizations may attempt to assimilate—that is, to alter their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and expectations at work to mirror those typically associated with men (Ely, 1995). The disproportionate representation of men over women in senior organizational positions may highlight for women their limited mobility and reinforce their perceptions of themselves as in a lower status than men.

There is ample evidence of the differential treatment experienced by racial/ethnic minorities

and women in the workplace. For example, men believe that gender is a cue to competence and that, in the absence of any definite information to the contrary, the performer’s gender becomes relevant in making job-related decisions (Forschi, Lad, & Sigerson, 1994). Women, on the other hand, either do not hold that belief, or do so to a lesser degree. Forschi et al. (1994) concluded that this double standard is a subtle mechanism through which the status quo of gender inequality in the workplace is maintained. For a summary chart of the research outcomes related to diversity and inclusion, see Figure 11.2.

Being in the minority has significant effects on individuals’ affective experiences in the workplace, including isolation in work groups and lack of identification in one-on-one relationships (Ibarra, 1995). Similarly, women tend to have less access to a variety of measures of status in the organization, such as income, position, and information, than do men (Alderfer, 1986). Because leadership and management qualities are defined mostly in masculine terms, these barriers persist for women (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). In the context of human services organizations, real participation in the decision-making process has been linked to job satisfaction, which in turn can potentially affect worker retention and effectiveness on the job (McNeely et al., 1998; Whiddon & Martin, 1989).

Implications for Human Services Organizations

Human services organizations are unique in the context of diversity and inclusion because they emphasize sensitivity to diversity in dealing with their clients but often neglect to be sensitive to the diversity of their own workforce (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson, 1998; McNeely, 1992). The theoretical formulations discussed in this chapter demonstrate that people are motivated to seek social inclusion and avoid exclusion. Further, individuals seek to belong to groups that are associated with higher status and prestige in society.

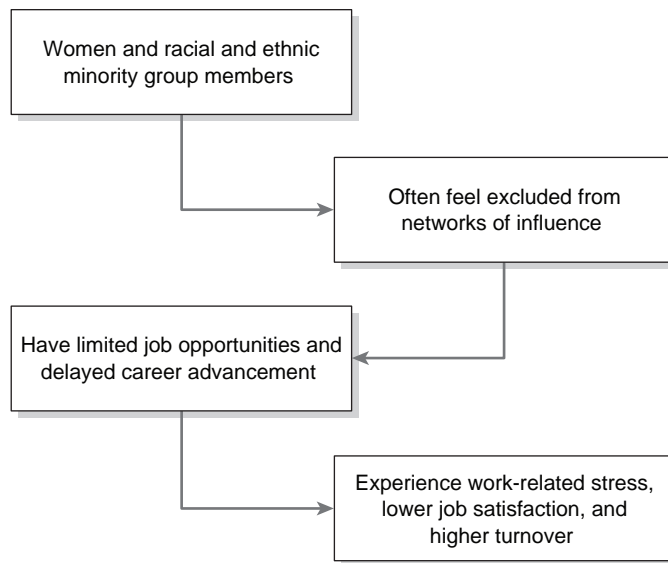


Figure 11.2 Summary Chart of the Diversity and Inclusion Research Outcomes

Belonging to such groups is central to individuals' identity and to their sense of worth. Other people's reactions, particularly the degree to which they accept and include individuals or reject and exclude them, are vital to a person's physical and psychological well-being (Leary & Downs, 1995).

Demographic characteristics of organizations, such as race and gender composition, help to shape the meanings people attach to their identity group memberships at work (Ely, 1994). As social identity theory has demonstrated, the way we perceive our social reality is significantly determined by our group memberships. It, therefore, follows that individual experiences vis-à-vis work organizations and their perceptions of organizational actions and policies will be affected by their identity group memberships. This social psychological perspective is useful to the current discussion because it indicates how identity groups shape worker experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. It is particularly relevant when membership in an identity group is associated with exclusion from employment opportunity and job mobility.

When a social group's status position is perceived to be low, it affects the social identity of group members. There are four paths to addressing the consequences of social exclusion (see Figure 11.3 for a summary):

1. *Individual change:* Individual members of the group may attempt to pass from a lower-status to a higher-status group through disassociating themselves psychologically and behaviorally from their low-status group. When successful, such a strategy will lead to a personal solution, but it will not make a difference in the excluded group's status. For example, an African American woman can rise to the top of an organization through exceptional talent, hard work, and luck, but, without an organizational change, other women, as well as members of minority groups, may not enjoy similar mobility.

2. *Group change:* Members may seek positive status for the group as a whole by redefining or altering the elements of the comparative situations. This could take place by, for example, changing the values assigned to the attributes

of the group so that comparisons that were previously negative are now perceived as positive (such as the slogan used by African Americans, “Black is Beautiful”). Similarly, with the entry of more women into management positions and into management scholarship, there is an effort to re-examine the qualities that are essential for effective management. Rather than expecting effective managers to be “assertive” and “aggressive,” qualities that have traditionally been perceived as male characteristics, there is a focus on “people skills” and “emotional intelligence,” qualities that have traditionally been perceived as female characteristics. This shift in emphasis opens the door for women as a group to be perceived as qualified for management without having to adopt what are considered more traditionally male characteristics.

3. *Organizational change:* Organizations can implement policies that remove barriers to advancement and promotion of members of disadvantaged groups and thus open up ways for members of these groups, as well as the groups as a whole, to improve their social identity. For example, providing networking opportunities and mentorship programs for members of diverse groups can open up advancement and promotion opportunities. Thus, these opportunities can enhance their access to power in the organizations as well as improve their benefit and salary package. Combined, these elements contribute to improved group status as well as social identity of group members.

4. *Societal change:* Society as a whole can create social mobility of disadvantaged groups through legislation and public policies. Equal opportunity legislation forbids discrimination and is, therefore, negative in that it indicates what individuals and organizations are *not* allowed to do. Public policies such as the Affirmative Action Program in the U.S. or Positive Action initiatives in Europe and in many other regions of the world are positive, in that they indicate what steps organizations *should* actively take in order to become more diverse organizations. Although banning discrimination through legislation is essential for

social mobility, it is not enough to combat persistent, institutionalized, and long-term discrimination against whole groups. Affirmative action policies are aimed at (a) righting past wrongs—compensating groups that have been disadvantaged in the past with better opportunities at present, and (b) achieving social goals of increasing the representation of traditionally disadvantaged groups in more lucrative jobs as well as management and leadership positions (Mor Barak, 2005). Therefore, the combination of antidiscrimination legislation and affirmative action programs can open up social mobility opportunities not only to individuals but to whole groups of society and can potentially create a society-wide change in group and individual social identity.

To provide high quality services to their clients, human services organizations must develop a well-trained, dedicated, responsive, and flexible workforce (Mor Barak & Travis, 2007). Research demonstrates that a combination of compliance with equal employment legislation, active participation in Affirmative Action Programs, and proactive organizational diversity management can have a positive impact on a variety of organizational outcomes (Mor Barak, 2005). Such inclusive practices have been shown to affect employee attitudes and emotions toward the organization, including organizational commitment (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001), job satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002; Vinokur-Kaplan, Jayarante, & Chess, 1994), and general well-being (Ibarra, 1995; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2003). They can also impact a variety of financial outcomes, including business growth and productivity (Richard, 2000), cost saving due to lower turnover, less absenteeism and improved productivity (Kirkpatrick, Phillips, & Phillips, 2003), and company image and stock prices (Robinson & Dechant, 1997; Wright, Ferris, Hiller, & Kroll, 1995). In short, inclusive practices not only are the right and ethical thing to do, they are beneficial to the effective management of the organization.

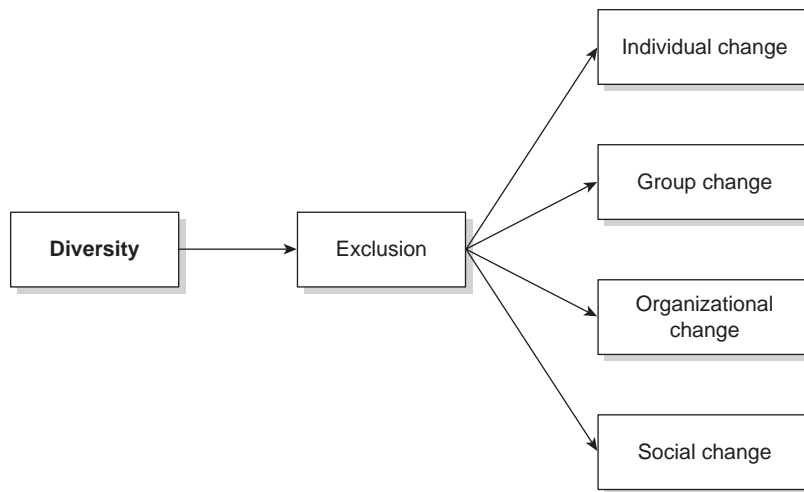


Figure 11.3 Paths to Address the Negative Consequences of Exclusion

Conclusion

Within the context of human services organizations, the need to understand exclusionary practices is particularly important in light of the disproportional representation of women and minorities among their employees (McNeely et al., 1993). A systematic approach to needs assessment and the fit between the community’s needs and its goals is the key to a successful and mutually beneficial collaboration. A similar examination of the relationship between a human services agency and the community it serves is also helpful, as often tensions develop between a diverse community and a less diverse social work agency that serves it (McNeely, Sapp, & Meyer, 1998).

The work environment is an important arena in which the mechanisms of intergroup relations are being played out because of individual and group efforts to gain advantage in the competition for (real or perceived) limited resources or out of misguided, ill-informed, or blatantly malicious attitudes toward other groups. Most people derive their livelihood from their jobs, as well as their personal identity, social relationships, and sense of self-fulfillment. The consequences of mechanisms such as discrimination and

exclusion can be detrimental to those affected, their families, the organizations that employ them, and their communities.

The inclusion-exclusion continuum, a central concept in this chapter, is linked to important psychological processes such as self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and a general perception that one’s life has meaning. This is particularly relevant for members of disadvantaged groups who may suffer the psychological consequences of being excluded. Therefore, this need to be included in social groups is a strong motivator in human behavior. Though one needs to be aware of the inherent competitive nature of identity groups—what one gains in status the other may lose—taken together, these theories tell us that work organizations may gain a more loyal, satisfied, and committed workforce by becoming more inclusive.

Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion of this global definition of diversity, please see Mor Barak, 2005, pp. 119–146.
2. The UN International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination Convention of 1958 (No. 111) defines discrimination as “Any distinction, exclusion

or preference . . . which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation as may be determined. In this convention the grounds for non-discrimination include race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin" (Zegers de Beijl, 1999, p. 10).

3. A *Time* magazine article from June 4, 1984, "Getting a Piece of the Power: Women Barred From Partnerships Can Now Go to Court," described the 1984 Supreme Court unanimous ruling that in deciding on partnership, it was illegal for law firms to discriminate against women simply because of their gender (p. 63).

4. *Japan Times*, May 15, 1984, p. 2.

5. For research scales that assess this construct in the context of diversity, see Mor Barak, 2005, pp. 293–299.

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