Purdue University

Purdue e-Pubs

Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

Why Gender Inclusive Leaders Matter in Academic Settings

Lynn Shore
lynn.shore@colostate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/worklifeinclusion

Why Gender Inclusive Leaders Matter in Academic Settings

Lynn M. Shore

Colorado State University

Recent studies of gender composition of business faculty provide evidence that women continue to be represented much less than men, especially in tenured Professor roles (only 20.1% are women, AACSB DataDirect, Salary Survey, 2018) and in tier 1 universities where 33% of these business schools have fewer than 20% women faculty (Poets and Quants, 2015). While these statistics tell a story of inequality, the question is why does this occur? And, what can be done to increase gender parity?

It has been well established that individuals and groups do not necessarily function in a manner that promotes inclusion (Mor Barak & Daya, 2014; Nishii, 2013; Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011) and may instead encourage exclusion, or ostracism (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). The inclusion and ostracism literatures have evolved independently, but each of these literatures are focused on essentially the same thing; the nature of and influence of being an accepted member of a group. Following, I summarize some key points in the inclusion and ostracism literatures, and how both literatures point to a key role for leaders in creating gender inclusive environments.

Inclusion

Shore et al. (2011) built on Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991) to synthesize the inclusion literature and to provide a basis for defining inclusion in the work group. They argued that, consistent with ODT, that the inclusion literature contains themes of belongingness (reflecting the need to form and maintain durable, steady interpersonal relationships; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and uniqueness (reflecting the need to maintain a distinctive and differentiated sense of self; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Shore et al. (2011) proposed in their conceptual model that experiencing belongingness and uniqueness are both key elements of perceiving inclusion in work groups.

Belonging in a group is more likely when there is similarity between the individual and the group (e.g. similarity-attraction paradigm, Byrne, 1971), or between the individual and the position. Since men are in the majority in business professor roles, women may be viewed as not a good fit or as challenging social norms. Another possibility is that the role of professor in the business school is seen as requiring agentic qualities that are ascribed to men such as behavior that demonstrates dominance, competitiveness, and achievement orientation (Heilman & Okomoto, 2007). In either case, women faculty may be handicapped by being viewed as not fitting the faculty role as well as their male colleagues.

Uniqueness, or being different than the group, as is the case of women in a male-dominated setting, may make women more vulnerable to social exclusion or ostracism (feeling ignored, excluded, or invisible). Ostracism is a form of social control that may be used purposefully for the sake of the group's well-being, such as punishing a group member who is defying social norms (Wesselmann, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder, & Williams, 2012). Likewise, non-purposeful ostracism occurs when ostracizers are not aware that they are socially excluding a target (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013; Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). As pointed out by Robinson et al. (2013: 208) ostracism "is defined by acts of omission rather than commission; that is, it results from the purposeful or inadvertent failure to act in ways that socially engage another. In other words, ostracism is the omission of positive attention from others rather than the commission of negative attention." As such, ostracism challenges a basic human need of belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Even though ostracism may be subtle, it has been found to have a very strong impact on targets. Ostracism threatens fulfillment of belongingness needs, self-esteem, a sense of control, and the belief that one's existence matters (Robinson et al., 2013; Williams, 1997). It also undermines emotions and mood (Robinson et al., 2013) and workplace exclusion (rejection by coworkers and the supervisor) is detrimental to work attitudes and psychological health (Hitlan, Clifton, & DeSoto, 2006). Women in academic environments may experience more subtle discrimination through acts of ostracism and "microinequities" (Rowe, 1990) and "microaggressions" (Sue, 2010). These can be verbal, behavioral, or environmental treatment that communicate a devaluing of a woman's contributions and can be intentional or unintentional. Such treatment thwarts a sense of belongingness and may harm women's ability to succeed. This raises a very important issue; what can be done to address the exclusion that undermines women's success? Policies that support the success of women academics is only one necessary step. It is, however, not adequate for addressing the important issue of creating equal opportunities for women faculty. I argue that inclusive leadership is critical to supporting women and protecting them from subtle unfair treatment that affects their ability to succeed.

Although women faculty are not experiencing inclusion at work to the same extent as their male colleagues, what is less clear is the nature of the responsibility of those who are in leadership roles. There is still limited research and theory focusing on leadership approaches that can address these difficulties by facilitating employee experiences of work group inclusion (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Leaders who promote the inclusion of women faculty not only offer value to the women themselves, but to the department and university where they work and to the profession more broadly. Who are these leaders then? First and foremost, senior faculty in the

woman's department and secondarily, the department chair, need to be aware of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which women faculty are disadvantaged and work actively to address these disadvantages. Senior colleagues can do this through treatment of women that promotes belongingness and valuing uniqueness. As proposed by Randel, Galvin, Shore, Ehrhart, Chung, Dean, and Kedharnath (2018), some leader behaviors that promote belongingness are supporting individuals as group members, ensuring justice and equity, and involving employees in decision making. So in the academic setting, this could involve inviting female colleagues to lunch or coffee, providing mentoring, introducing them to key colleagues in the senior faculty member's network, asking for opinions on key issues, and addressing salary or other resource inequities that support junior colleagues' careers. For leader behaviors that promote uniqueness, Randel et al. suggest encouraging diverse contributions and helpings group members fully contribute. These types of leader behaviors make clear that the ways in which group members differ add value to the group. In the academic setting this could involve senior faculty encouraging the perspectives and research of their women colleagues and reviewing manuscripts and giving feedback to help with successful publication efforts. These forms of social support by senior colleagues suggest that women faculty are valued members of the department and profession.

To understand the science of work-life inclusion, we need to study leader inclusion and how it affects the inclusion experiences of junior faculty. Key antecedents would be gender attitudes of department leaders, ostracism experiences, and leader behaviors of belongingness and uniqueness. Perceived inclusion of faculty would be a mediator with gender composition as a moderator. Outcomes would be perceived promotability, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. This would be a field study in various departments of business across many universities to examine the inclusion experiences of women and men faculty.

References

Barillas, J. (May, 2018). AACSB and AAUP Faculty Salary Comparative Analysis. *AACSB*.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. 1995. The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497-529.

Brewer, M. B. 1991. The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *17*, 475-482.

Byrne, D. E. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.

Heilman, M. E., & Okimoto, T. G. (2007). Why are women penalized for success at male tasks?: the implied communality deficit. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*, 81−92.

Hitlan, R. T., Cliffton, R. J., & DeSoto, M. C. 2006. Perceived exclusion in the workplace: The moderating effects of gender on work-related attitudes and psychological health. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *8*, 217-236.

Mor Barak, M. E., & Daya, P. (2014). Fostering inclusion from the inside out to create an inclusive workplace: Corporate and organizational efforts in the community and the global society. In B. M. Ferdman, & B. R. Deane (Eds.), *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion* (pp. 391–412). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nishii, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*, 1754–1774.

Nishii, L. H., & Mayer, D. M. (2009). Do inclusive leaders help to reduce turnover in diverse groups? The moderating role of leader–member exchange in the diversity to turnover relationship. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(6), 1412.

Randel, A., Galvin, B., Shore, L.M., Chung, B., Ehrhart, K.H., Dean, M., & Kedharnath, U. (2018). Inclusive leadership: Realizing positive outcomes through a focus on belongingness and being valued for uniqueness. *Human Resource Management Review, 28*(2), 190-203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.002

Robinson, S.L., O'Reilly, J., & Wang, W. (2013). Invisible at work: An integrated model of workplace ostracism. *Journal of Management*, *39*, 203–231. doi: 10.1146/annurev. psych.54.101601.145059

Rowe, M. P. (1990). People who feel harassed need a complaint system with both formal and informal options. *Negotiation Journal*, 6, 161–172.

Schmitt, J. (May, 2015). A Gender Scorecard for Business Schools. *Poets and Quants*.

Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, *37*, 1262–1289. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0149206310385943.

Snyder, C. R., & Fromkin, H. L. 1980. *Uniqueness, the human pursuit of difference*. New York: Plenum.

Sommer, K. L., Williams, K. D., Ciarocco, N. J., & Baumeister, R. (2001). When silence speaks louder than words: explorations into the intrapsychic and interpersonal consequences of social ostracism. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *23*, 225-243.

Sue, D. W. (Ed.), (2010). *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Williams, K. D. 1997. Social ostracism. In R. M. Kowalski (eds.), *Aversive interpersonal behaviors* (pp, 133-170). New York: Plenum.