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# Gender Data Gap and its impact on management science — Reflections from a European perspective

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## ABSTRACT

As data increasingly inform every aspect of our lives, gender discrimination in the collection and application of female-based data has also risen. Because data are primarily sourced from (white) men, the solutions we design to address global problems are also primarily based on men, i.e. male bodies, male preferences and prototypical male life choices. The *Gender Data Gap* – referring to the circumstance that most data on which organisational decisions are based appear to be biased in favour of (white) men – describes this very absence of information about aspects of women's lives. In this article, we not only demonstrate how the *Gender Data Gap* (negatively) impacts society and management science, but also highlight how the gap can be overcome in the long run. Further, we showcase several initiatives, particularly European ones, that suggest opportunities to gradually close the *Gender Data Gap*.

## 1. Introduction

'Europe is going through a testing time' was Anker's opening line for a reflection in the *European Management Journal* some years ago (Anker, 2017, p. 1). In light of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (EU), Anker argued for the necessity of Europe to establish a new democratic equilibrium, pointing to the constructive role that businesses play in enabling democratic conditions. Five years on, the EU is going through even more testing times. Brexit, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-related disasters such as flooding and storms, inflation, economic uncertainty and increasing levels of inequality have resulted in many of the outcomes Anker warned about on European as well as global levels: societal polarisation, extremism, radicalisation and social unrest form a constant undercurrent of the news nowadays. Most recently, the tragic war initiated by Russia, while Europe confronts severe challenges and its aftermath on political, environmental and social levels will have an impact, especially on Europe as well as NATO for decades to come.

Predominantly and in such turbulent times, we agree with Anker's analysis that businesses can play a fundamental role in shaping and safeguarding the conditions of democracy. However, while businesses

can be key political actors in society to eventually achieve the claimed new democratic equilibrium, they have a limited role in democratic processes (Anker, 2021). This raises questions about the responsibilities of businesses towards society, which typically revolve around corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006; Rasche, 2015; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007, 2011; Whelan, 2012). Extending these questions, in this reflection, we propose data accessibility as a key structural condition that could enable what Anker (2017) describes as the capacity of businesses to shape and safeguard democratic conditions. Today more than ever, data informs every aspect of our lives, from medicine and transport to the economy and crisis management. Most of the data we collect is sourced from (white) men, which is referred to as the *Gender Data Gap* due to missing data on women. Specifically, this data gap refers to circumstances where the majority of data on which organisational decisions are based are biased in favour of males (Criado Perez, 2019, 2020). This lack of information is mostly owing to the incomplete and/or unreliable systematic data collection on areas of women's lives (Buvinic & Levine, 2016).

Due to the existing data gap, our understanding of global problems and the solutions we design for them are primarily based on men; male bodies, male preferences and prototypical male life choices (Criado

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Perez, 2019, 2020; cf. Auschra, Bartosch, & Lohmeyer, 2022; Beaudry & Larivière, 2016; Lerchenmueller & Sorenson, 2018; Nielsen & Börjeson, 2019). Even decisions concerning issues that primarily affect women, such as reproductive health, are often made without considering relevant data about women (Franklin, Albani, & Bambra, 2020). Also, organisations have not invested in learning how key transitions in women's bodies influence their work and vice-versa (Atkinson, Beck, Brewis, Davies, & Duberley, 2021). We acknowledge that the data gap concerns not only gender but also prevents us from seeing and acting upon intersectional inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, while we use the term *Gender Data Gap* to ensure our terminology is consistent with extant literature, we do consider that this applies to intersectional connotations.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic has deteriorated the problem. Several studies highlight the severe consequences of the pandemic on businesses as well as the workforce with women being more negatively impacted than men (Milliken, Kneeland, & Flynn, 2020). In part, this can be attributed to an underestimation of the extent and dimensions of women's caregiving work. Given that work-family policies are often adopted isomorphic processes (Pasamar & Alegre, 2015), this may explain why they have not been sufficiently well designed to address families' real needs and ensure that women can continue to be successful in the workplace (Beham, Baierl, & Eckner, 2020). Hence, the existing *Gender Data Gap* poses a significant obstacle for a just and equitable post-COVID Europe; however, it is largely absent from management scholarship and practices so far. We believe that tackling this data gap would contribute to Anker's (2021: 176) envisioning of alternative post-pandemic ideologies 'by developing social systems theories where business is not just a necessary function to sustain the existing system and social order, but part of the steering mechanism of a new, or re-engineered, system'. Arguably, the current system – smoothly built around white and male bodies (e.g. Oluo, 2020) – can only be renewed when we start collecting and acting upon data associated with underrepresented and marginalised groups, one of them being women. Particularly in Europe, a challenge to this effort is the historically grounded hesitance to collect ethnic data on citizens (Farkas, 2017).

## 2. A European perspective on data

While we might readily agree that collecting data is necessary to overcome the *Gender Data Gap* and its associated inequalities, the history of World War II poses a unique challenge for Europe. The Holocaust, the genocide of Europe's Jewish population, was facilitated by the availability of data on religious affiliation. In 1939, the German census contained a supplementary card to record names, maiden names, residence, gender, birthday, religion, mother tongue, ethnicity, occupation and the number of children in the respective household. These data formed a cornerstone for the registration of the Jewish population and the bureaucratic prerequisite for their deportation and murder (Aly & Roth, 2004). To this day, censuses are met with violent resistance in Germany. The planned census in 1983 was accompanied by massive protests and was eventually prevented by citizens who filed a constitutional complaint (Krzistetzko, 2018) arguing that '(...) [t]here is no harmless data'. To date, resistance to any form of surveillance, especially to data collection, looms large in many parts of Europe, mainly based on the fear of the population of irresponsible data gathering or data usage (cf. Nickerson & Rogers, 2014). As a result, legislation relating to data protection and privacy is much stricter in Europe today when compared to, for instance, the U.S. Most recently, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect in May 2018. It is one of the most consequential regulatory developments, bringing personal data into a detailed regulatory regime that will influence personal data usage globally (Hoofnagle, van der Sloot, & Borgesius, 2019).

For these reasons, the lack of available data and privacy legislation often stands in the way of designing and implementing effective measures to increase diversity and inclusion or gender equality in the

European workplace. In a recent study on the diversity of women and minorities at the top management level, Schoen and Rost (2021) noted that while extensive research has been conducted on the barriers that hinder women and minorities' way to the top, very little is known about the organisational practices that would eventually help to increase diversity at this level. However, for organisational practices to be designed to help members of marginalised and underrepresented groups advance to top management positions, data on those groups is essential. Further, many interventions to increase gender equality fail because they do not—and cannot—account for intersectional inequality experiences (Täuber, 2022). In academia, for instance, women who are foreigners experience additional challenges to their career progressions (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014; Strauß & Boncori, 2020). A related pattern exists among expatriates, where female expatriates are less successful in translating their international experience into career advancement when compared to their male peers (Selmer & Leung, 2002; see also Sang and Calvard (2019) on academic migrants). Similarly, in their influential review of intersectionality in the labour market, Browne and Misra (2003) report that on indicators such as wages, job security and occupational position, black women, Latinas and some groups of Asian women perform far worse than white women and men of their same race or ethnicity. Despite these insights, resistance to collecting data that would allow to map and tackle intersectional disadvantages more effectively is strong. In essence, the historically grounded European desire to protect citizens' data to shield them from abuse of power and violence also forms an eventual obstacle to allowing all citizens to participate fully and equally.

Indeed, tackling the data gaps related to marginalised and underrepresented groups would be entirely in the tradition of European management scholarship, as convincingly analysed by Chia (2014) who firmly anchors scholarly openness to the plurality of perspectives in the British and European intellectual traditions. According to Chia (2014: 683), the future of management scholarship lies within this inclusive pluralism, allowing for a 'scholarship of common sense' characterised by openness, diversity of perspectives and imagination. Echoing this, EMJ's editorial team repeated their commitment to making a difference through management scholarship in their 2019 editorial, specifically pointing to the 'many social, economic, political and technological changes that have wide-spread implications for how organisations are managed and impact on individuals' workplace experiences,' the editorial team calls for more 'fine-grained qualitative, quantitative and comparative research into what is currently happening in organisations but also theoretically- and empirically-driven critical responses as to how organisations can be managed differently and how workplace experiences can be improved' (Kastanakis et al., 2019, p. 245). Heeding this call, our reflection invites the reader to consider the impact of the *Gender Data Gap* on society as well as on management scholarship (section 3) and the positive impact expected for management practice and scholarship (section 4) from acknowledging and overcoming this data gap. We conclude this reflection with an outlook on future theory and research, and a call for action (section 5).

## 3. The Gender Data Gap

The *Gender Data Gap* refers to the circumstance that the majority of data on which organisational decisions are based appear to be biased in favour of males (Criado Perez, 2019, 2020). The data are often of poor quality given that there is an 'absence of information about aspects of women's lives' (Buvinic & Levine, 2016, p. 32). While gender equity refers to 'fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs', gender equality aims to provide 'men and women with the same equal opportunities' (Fortune, 2020). Empowering women and men with the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities – independent of their sex designation at birth – must be the overarching goal. Even though it has been acknowledged (e.g. Forbes, 2020; Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, & van Praag, 2013; Zaid et al., 2020) that both

gender equity and gender equality may have a positive impact on organisational performance, we are still far from achieving equity and equality in organisations. The prevailing disparity is present in numerous facets of organisations, including gender pay (in)equity and (in)equality as well as career development and promotion (e.g. Joshi, Son, & Roh, 2015; Ng & Sears, 2017; Ugarte & Rubery, 2021; Whitehouse, 2001).

### 3.1. How does the Gender Data Gap impact society

The *Gender Data Gap* not only has severe consequences for women in business management but is also a broadly prevailing phenomenon that can have dangerous effects as the following medical example demonstrates. Recent research on 1.3 million patients in Canada shows that women who are operated on by a male surgeon are 15% more liable to suffer a bad outcome, and 32% more likely to die, experience complications and be readmitted to hospital than when a woman carries out the surgery (Wallis et al., 2022); whereas, women surgeons have no different outcomes for their male and female patients. The data gap could help again explain these outcomes as medical textbooks predominantly illustrate medical conditions with visuals of white male bodies (Parker, Larkin, & Cockburn, 2017), medical products and innovations often have more negative side effects for women (Parekh, Fadiran, Uhl, & Throckmorton, 2011), and male scientists are less likely to incorporate gender and sex analyses in their research (Nielsen, Andersen, Schiebinger, & Schneider, 2017). All of these gender data gaps occur within organisations; education, research and development laboratories and quality control functions.

Further, in organisations, the gap has a negative knock-on impact as the failure to recognise the bias in the underlying data could cause slow progress towards gender equality in organisations (England, Levine, & Mishel, 2020). Organisations, corporations and businesses are committed to increasing diversity and equality in the workforce more than ever (McKinsey, 2021). However, when they set policies, they often use data on only males or data that include females but are biased in favour of males (hereinafter, male data) as the default. For example, office thermostats are typically set to temperatures that facilitate men's (but not women's) cognitive performance (Chang & Kajackaite, 2019), presumably because the policy concerning the regulation of temperature relies on male data.

Consequently, women continue to face obstacles within organisational contexts that their male colleagues do not encounter. Such obstacles can not only result from differences in communication and leadership styles but also organisational practices that favour men (e.g. gendered promotion criteria; van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Ramos, Latorre, Tomás, & Ramos, 2022). A recent study that examined 317 U.S. companies with combined employees of more than 40,000 concluded that only approximately 1 in 5 C-suite executives is a woman (McKinsey, 2020). Hence, the male data bias and female data gap are important factors in the reproduction of gender inequalities despite companies' commitment to fighting female underrepresentation in top executive positions (e.g. Milliken et al., 2020; Piderit & Ashford, 2003). Also, considering organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), it has been deplored that the scales for measuring it are gendered in favour of men; nearly all well-established scales applied in OCB use questions that focus on male respondents (e.g. asking about participation in meetings, but not about planning and organising such meetings – which women are more likely to engage in than men), resulting in a disregard of women (Bergeron & Rochford, 2022).

Closing the *Gender Data Gap* is an urgent task that demands timely action. The Artificial Intelligence revolution, already well underway, magnifies the biases and will likely reproduce and solidify preferential treatment and discrimination (i.e. ITU, 2020). For example, developers of Guild Technology Inc., an online platform for evaluating tech job candidates, relied not only on applicant information but also scraped web data for indicators of the time candidates spent sharing and

developing code. But these web-scraping algorithms did not account for factors specific to women in coding and tech spaces—for example: women often use male aliases on open-source coding platforms to avoid harassment. Because it did not account for women using male aliases, the AI system automatically undercounting women candidates' qualifications (see Church, 2016; Smith & Rustagi, 2021). The prospect of AI magnifying existing biases is a harrowing prospect given that the *Gender Data Gap* already costs lives and impedes livelihoods.

### 3.2. How does the Gender Data Gap impact theory and research in management science

Management scholarship also often neglects the fact that the data used to set up the rules and policies are by default based on males and masculine references. For instance, organisation and management research claims to be neutral but is typically based on male data and network theory illustrates this. The theory examines how individuals set up and use networks to receive information and knowledge. However, even though gender-based differences in communication styles are well known in the literature (e.g. Bushell, Hoque, & Dean, 2020; Greguletz, Diehl, & Kreutzer, 2019), the theory consistently ignores such differences. As a consequence of this ignorance, the standard definition of a 'good' network still fails to take into account the fact that women often use distinct (but not necessarily less successful) networking approaches (e.g. Brands & Kilduff, 2014; Brands & Mehra, 2019; Woehler, Cullen-Lester, Porter, & Frear, 2021). In this context, Brands, Ertug, Fonti, and Tasselli (2022: 31) claim that '[s]cholarship on gender and networks tends to take men [...] as the baseline or default when theorizing, and women [...] as the exception'. Relying on 'neutral' (that is, male) definitions of important phenomena, such as networks, as the default, will often lead to interventions focusing on 'fixing the women' so they can more effectively (that is, like men) use networks, rather than acknowledging that women use networks differently. Such interventions ultimately undermine diversity and reproduce inequality. They isolate women who do not want to be fixed and disproportionately promote women who display male characteristics. If we want to achieve actual gender equality, we need to understand how, why and when the *Gender Data Gap* undermines effective interventions up the organisational ladder. Acknowledging the data gap offers new insights on leverage points for change.

Acker, a pioneer in the study of gender in organisations, referred to gendered organisations as workplaces in which '*advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine*' (1990: 146). One of Acker's main observations was that internal organisational rules and rituals produce (and reproduce) differences between women and men. Discussions on gendered organisations are ongoing today more than ever, for example, around gendered human resources practices such as recruiting via referrals, rewarding individuals for resolving (rather than avoiding) workplace conflict and working from home (e.g. Fotaki & Harding, 2017; Kenny, 2019). Women still tend to be underrepresented, particularly in senior and leadership positions in organisations (D'Agostino, Levine, Sabharwal, & Johnson-Manning, 2022; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016), and it appears that gendered organisations have processes, policies and procedures in place that continue to maintain gender biases (Bates, 2021; Benschop & van den Brink, 2019; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Mastrocci & Arreola, 2016) where women tend to be excluded, absent or marginalised from power, visibility and decision processes.

If we, as management scholars, keep ignoring the *Gender Data Gap*, we become complicit in perpetuating and reproducing the inequalities, polarisation and extremism that threaten democracy in Europe and globally.



#### 4. Overcoming the Gender Data Gap

Following Anker (2017), and to support and use the capacity of businesses to shape and safeguard democratic conditions in Europe and beyond, we solicit the scholarly and practice business community to contribute to overcoming the *Gender Data Gap*. Hence, we showcase several initiatives, often grassroots movements that attempt to collect (at least some of the large amount of) data that are currently missing. We use these examples to illustrate the real-life impact of collecting and interpreting data on policy-making, legislation and documenting crimes and corruption.

##### 4.1. Grassroot initiatives to close the Gender Data Gap

An increasing number of gender data collection efforts have been initiated over the past years, often borne from sheer despair at the institutional indifference and inaction despite the growing social consciousness of gender inequalities. Of these initiatives, the #MeToo movement is the most prominent one, shedding light on the prevalence of sexual harassment and power abuse. However, smaller initiatives have proven equally impactful. For instance, the 1752 Group<sup>1</sup> research on sexual harassment and the complaint process in higher education in the UK. The Academic Parity Movement<sup>2</sup> supports victims of bullying and discrimination in academia. The project Counting Dead Women<sup>3</sup> – initiated by Karen Ingala Smith, the CEO of a London-based domestic and sexual violence charity – is a powerful example of data collection against the odds. The project evolved into the Femicide Census,<sup>4</sup> about which Smith says ‘[t]here is little information about the women killed by men. Our census is building up a picture that can help save others’ (Smith, 2021). Indeed, the data collected by these women yielded important insights into the nature and aetiology of femicides. Their data helped to uncover that over a quarter of the killings of women by men would not be tackled by focusing on domestic violence, but that they present an escalation of prior coercive control. These insights were instrumental in drafting new legislation that makes coercive control a criminal offence (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) not only in the UK but in various countries in Europe and beyond. In a related vein, the data collected and interpreted by the 1752 Group resulted in sector guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education (Bull, Calvert-Lee, & Page, 2021).

While collecting data is crucial for documenting the *Gender Data Gap*, initiatives that aim to close the *Gender Data Gap* – that is, use data to identify a male default in practice and make the practice more gender-specific—are also underway. The medical sciences have embraced the insight that male and female bodies should not be treated the same in diagnosis and treatment, which resulted in sex- and gender-specific medicine (e.g. Legato & Bilezikian, 2004). Elsevier has recently launched the first complete female anatomy model (Elsevier, 2022). Going beyond male surgeons not knowing female anatomy as well as female surgeons, the model’s launch has been celebrated as a major milestone in equal representation. Revolutionising education and research in the medical sciences, educators and instructors can teach the comparative difference between male and female anatomy for the first time (Elsevier, 2022). Beyond the medical sciences, Wikipedia has taken another approach aiming to close the *Gender Data Gap* with edit-a-thons, which are collaborative events bringing together groups of people to improve Wikipedia pages with the explicit aim to fill existing gaps in information and representation. For example, past edit-a-thons aimed to increase the visibility of women scientists and the availability of female role models on the platform. A recent event to strengthen Wikipedia’s

coverage of women generally was called the WikiGap Challenge and was organised in collaboration with the UN Human Rights Office. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has called for action on bridging the gender divide, also in the digital world, to implement ‘the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and help achieve the G20 goal of strong, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (OECD, 2018, p. 6). Bridging the gender divide in business and management requires overcoming barriers to the effectiveness of interventions aimed to increase women’s participation and representation at all levels of organisations (Abramovic & Traavik, 2017; Ramos et al., 2022; Schoen & Rost, 2021). Illustrating that this sometimes can involve small-scale changes, a French non-profit cooperative organisation began offering paid menstrual leave based on their survey of its female employees, which found that 56% of their female employees experienced painful periods. This was a first in France but has since been followed by the Spanish government that approved a bill granting employees the right to take paid sick leave due to menstrual pain.<sup>5</sup> The Chelsea FC Women Club announced in 2020 that their players’ practice drills’ schedule will be adapted based on their menstrual cycle. Whether or not one agrees with these particular recent initiatives taking into account this female issue, the overall direction of these real-life examples increasingly talks to organisations questioning the male default as a set standard.

##### 4.2. Initiatives in scholarship

While many studies have examined the manifold organisational rules and rituals that tend to disadvantage women, a focus on the *Gender Data Gap* is a novel approach to examining this long-standing problem. When discussing female disadvantages caused by organisational rules and policies, it is crucial to look below the surface and investigate on what data these policies are based. While an organisational policy or practice might not discriminate overtly against women, if it is based solely on male data (i.e. male experiences, male evaluations, male standards, etc.) and, therefore, does not fit women, it can still negatively impact their wellbeing and, eventually, their careers (e.g. Fenech, Kanji, & Vargha, 2022; Sools, Engen, & Baerveldt, 2007). Policies and practices that do neither fit nor represent women can have a significant impact on whether women reach top executive positions as they have to compete in an environment that does neither reflect nor address their needs (Pullen, Rhodes, & Thanem, 2017; Taylor, Buck, Bloch, & Turgeon, 2019).

For a long time, feminist and gender studies have called for action (Acker, 1990; Deutsch, 2007) to create real equality between women and men in all aspects of society as well as in organisations. Inclusion and equal opportunity stand for fundamental rights in European societies (European Commission, 2017) and should provide a better workplace for all while offering the basis for sustainable and inclusive growth. A concrete example in France is the ‘Gender Equality Charter’,<sup>6</sup> initiated in 2009 by the French Ministry of Higher Education together with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunity. This Charter promotes active engagement for gender equality and parity in all universities and higher education and research organisations across France and has been revised with a more concrete action plan in 2013.<sup>7</sup> Formal signings were organised, which attracted considerable news coverage. With women scholars across all levels – notably fully tenured professors as well as higher education and research institution leaders, deans, university presidents, etc. – still underrepresented and not displaying parity across all instances, this initiative led to a constant

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/spain-cabinet-approves-menstrual-leave-bill/a-61830181>.

<sup>6</sup> [https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/Charte\\_egalite\\_femmes\\_hommes/90/2/chartes\\_dossier\\_couv\\_239902.pdf](https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/Charte_egalite_femmes_hommes/90/2/chartes_dossier_couv_239902.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.letudiant.fr/static/uploads/mediatheque/EDU\\_EDU/4/5/65945-plan-action-egalite-femmes-hommes-original.pdf](https://www.letudiant.fr/static/uploads/mediatheque/EDU_EDU/4/5/65945-plan-action-egalite-femmes-hommes-original.pdf).

<sup>1</sup> <https://1752group.com>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://paritymovement.org/about>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://kareningalasmith.com>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.femicidecensus.org>.

increase of women academics in higher education and research leadership positions as women scholars across all levels.<sup>8</sup> Also, at the level of the European Union, the picture is not any better as the Member States all lag behind, with figures ranging from 4% to 35% of women university rectors<sup>9</sup> promoted from a pool of full professors across the EU who are still around 21% women only, despite an increased effort to have more women professors across all disciplines (cf. [Rathenau Instituut, 2022](#)). How can role models of women scientists be created to inspire the younger generation when there are generally still far too few women present in higher education and research overall and even less in leadership positions?

## 5. Outlook on future theory & research and call for action

As outlined above, we have thus far missed a systematic vision of the existence and relevance of the *Gender Data Gap* in management science. However, acknowledging and understanding the serious consequences of this data gap for approximately half the entire population is essential before effective measures can be taken at societal as well as organisational levels to improve this serious drawback. From an organisational view, starting to collect and interpret the missing data is of great relevance and will eventually have an important impact on existing routines and practices, which for decades have been based on (the only available) male data.

From a management perspective, the data gap on gender is of high importance, not least in the context of the ongoing discussion on gender quota in top management positions and how to ensure women reach those positions. In this regard, to collect data, [Ramos et al. \(2022\)](#) have developed the TOP WOMAN scale, which stands for ‘Testing the Obstacles to Promotion of WOMen to MANagement’ and pursues the goal of analysing and finding measures to minimise the gender discrimination in top management level. However, the underlying problem is much more fundamental and more far-reaching than ‘only’ missing data on gender. Essentially, missing data is a well-known deficit that also concerns other social actors with similarly severe consequences, such as minoritised racial and ethnic people. Addressing the *Gender Data Gap* is a necessary step, which can help to gain valuable insights into related data gaps, while the data gaps on other underrepresented groups in the workplace as well as intersectional aspects should likewise be on the agendas of management scholars, policymakers and organisational leadership. Acknowledging and inventorying the data gaps on marginalised and underrepresented groups can only be the first steps. Organisations and institutions must also act on the newly acquired data to become more equitable for women and in extension, more equitable for everyone who happens to fall outside the reigns of intersectional privilege. If knowledge does not lead to action, insights into the *Gender Data Gap* may result in ineffective policy advice as occurred with the domestic abuse legislation and anti-harassment policies in academia. For instance, scholars noted that legislative change that makes coercive control a criminal offence will not lead to improvements on its own; laws have to be applied and enforced ([Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018](#)). Echoing this, scholars found that anti-harassment policies in higher education have had no discernible effect on harassment over the past 30 years, likely because the policies are ineffective if the organisational structures that enable harassment do not change ([Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020](#)). These observations point to the immense task for leadership to not only close the *Gender Data Gap*, but also invest in education, awareness and structural change. Exemplary leadership modelling best practice is crucial to prevent the creation of policy-practice gaps that are notoriously known for reproducing existing inequalities.

In terms of approaches to close (or for a start at least minimise) the *Gender Data Gap* through academic research, several routes seem particularly fruitful in stimulating novel theoretical insights. First, *exploring the evolution of the Gender Data Gap* and the mechanisms maintaining it in organisation and management studies. For instance, one could track how often scholars assess whether the theories and findings they advance hold for both women and men in the sample; to what extent are findings in organisation and management studies disaggregated by sex (which is different from controlling for gender)? One might also seek to identify what data domains and data within domains are excluded from management and organisational studies. This could be at the level of the individual (differences in individual experiences due to gender, such as domestic violence), the organisation (use of gender-neutral PPE equipment causes more harm to women)<sup>10</sup> and even public policy (minimum wage set on men’s living costs, transportation routes, etc.).

Second, *questioning the Gender Data Gap* may also involve examining oft-used government-sponsored census or population-based surveys and other large data sets frequently used in organisational and management studies, for what is included and excluded, so that data collection efforts can become more inclusive. At times, governments push these efforts at a national level; in addition, the United Nations are leading larger efforts for making data comparable across countries (e.g. [Abreu Lopes & Bailur, 2018](#)). For example, studies on patenting or product recall rely on data sets that may not necessarily identify whether the patents’ (or product recalls) relate to men, women, or both. Introducing more finesse in the outcomes we study is another way of becoming more *Gender Data Gap* conscious and developing new research. Recently, following the *Black Lives Matter Movement* pressures for societal justice, ISS,<sup>11</sup> which collects (among other things) demographic data on executives, revised its data set using more care to systematically provide reliable information on the race and ethnicity of the directors and executives in their dataset ([Eavis, 2022](#); [ISS, 2020](#)).

Third, from a normative perspective, for instance, *building bridges between sexual harassment research and network theory appears promising*. In a recent review, [Cortina and Areguin \(2021: 289\)](#) stated that from a legal perspective, sexual harassment is seen as discrimination based on sex that ‘perpetuates, enforces and polices a set of gender norms at work that seek to feminize women and masculinize men’. In this context, the *Gender Data Gap* seems to arise from male-dominated norms concerning success and collaboration. However, despite the violation of equal treatment legislation in most countries, the profound impact that such norms have on women’s careers, wellbeing and their reaching the top management positions has not been of focal interest in studies on gender differences in the workplace. Diversity management has often been limited to fixing numbers, while neglecting the need to fix the organisational culture, which in turn, is biased by male data ([Tzanakou, 2019](#)). Language analysis in organisations is one approach that can render gender norming explicit and visible, and thus can bring into focus male-dominated organisational cultures. The important role that language and discourse play in perpetuating and reproducing existing power differentials has been acknowledged since [Bourdieu’s \(1991; 2001\)](#) seminal works. However, in organisations, more research into discourses that aim to normalise gender inequality or resist initiatives to achieve gender equality is needed ([Point & Singh, 2003](#)). This is particularly relevant because companies use discourse to deviate from established national corporate governance frameworks that aim to implement gender quotas on boards ([Aguilera, Judge, & Terjesen, 2018](#); [De Cabo, Terjesen, Escot, & Gimeno, 2019](#); [Dobija, Hryckiewicz, Zaman, & Puławska, 2022](#)).

Fourth, and following from the above, *examining the effects of the*

<sup>8</sup> [https://archives-statistiques-depp.education.gouv.fr/Default/doc/SYR/ACUSE/45423/vers-l-egalite-femmes-hommes-chiffres-cles-2019-ministere-de-l-enseignement-superieur-de-la-recherche?\\_lg=fr-FR](https://archives-statistiques-depp.education.gouv.fr/Default/doc/SYR/ACUSE/45423/vers-l-egalite-femmes-hommes-chiffres-cles-2019-ministere-de-l-enseignement-superieur-de-la-recherche?_lg=fr-FR).

<sup>9</sup> <https://epws.org/female-university-leadership-europe>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/24/sexism-on-the-covid-19-frontline-ppe-is-made-for-a-6ft-3in-rugby-player>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.issgovernance.com>.





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