

GENDER AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE

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Chapter Overview

In the 21st century, gender issues are becoming more prominent as women increasingly enter the workforce. This demographic shift has attracted the interest of corporate and government sectors, prompting policy considerations and implications regarding these new workers (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). Like race and ethnicity, gender is pivotal to initiatives seeking to recognize and embrace diversity under the auspices of globalization and the need for marketplace innovation (Kurowski, 2002; Soni, 2000). Dolan (2004) notes that a diverse public sector is important for symbolic reasons and should reflect a pluralistic nation. As such, the public will be more responsive to bureaucratic decisions when the workforce “looks like America” (Dolan, 2004).

Women are now an integral part of the diverse workforce, not only supplementing family income but also pursuing careers in formerly predominantly male professions. Men are also exploring new work-related options and rethinking conventional gender-role stereotypes. Thus, some gender issues that primarily mattered to women are now concerns of men as well (DeLaat, 2007). While the increased presence of women in the professional and business world suggests that the struggle for gender equality is over, women and men continue to confront gender inequality due to persistent gender bias in areas including advancement, compensation, benefits, and family obligations (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Reece & Brandt, 2008).

Gender-related issues in the workforce attract considerable attention from researchers and practitioners in an effort to understand the complex issues impacting working women and men. Much of the research literature on the subject of gender focuses on issues related to women (Stewart, Bing, Gruys, & Helford, 2007).

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, along with completing the chapter summary questions and the case discussion questions, you will be able to:

- Apply a social role framework to conceptualize gender and diversity in the workforce
- Chronicle a historical overview of the role of gender and diversity in the earliest periods of the U.S. workforce
- Explain how gender discrimination in the workplace occurs
- Describe the myth of equality and distinguish the glass ceiling from the glass escalator
- Understand contemporary issues facing women and men in the workplace and the implications for policy and practice

Conceptualizing Gender and Diversity in the Workforce: A Social Role Perspective

In the scholarship on diversity and inequality within organizations, gender issues (e.g., sex differences and similarities, division of labor, stereotypes, discrimination, and wage gap inequality) merit considerable attention in framing discussions on diversity in the workforce. Women and men in the workforce confront a number of gender-related issues that manifest in tacit or expressed practices and are steeped in traditional beliefs and values.

Whereas the study of diversity in the workforce draws from sociology and psychology, it has primarily been examined in the management literature (DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007). Similarly, the study of gender draws on psychology including but not limited to social role theory, providing a linkage between gender and diversity in the workforce. Social role theory seeks to explain the cause of differences and similarities in social behavior (Eagly, 1987; Eagly,

Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Based on meta-analytic methods to aggregate differences between women and men, research suggests that they behave similarly more than 98% of the time (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000). However, when differences occur, research also suggests that these differences become stereotypes between the sexes. Furthermore, as Vogel, Wester, Heesacker, and Madon (2003) observe, “these differences, although small, are important because they may emerge more strongly under some conditions and less strongly under others” (p. 519). The body of literature underscores the perspective that the differences between men and women reinforce gender stereotypes in the workplace, benefitting men as women gain more access to opportunities that were previously denied to them.

In considering the experiences of both women and men in the workforce, it is important to distinguish between the terms *sex* and *gender*. **Sex** indicates the binary categories of female and male (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010, p. 2). **Gender** refers to the social construction of differences between women and men and the social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male (E-Mine Electronic Mine Information Network, 2009; Marini, 1990). From a Western perspective, gender is rooted in societal beliefs that females and males are naturally distinct and more or less opposed social beings (Amott & Matthaai, 2007). Central to the distinction between sex and gender are **gender roles**, which are traditional beliefs about what functions are appropriate for women and men (Perrone, Wright, & Jackson, 2009; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010), and **gender stereotypes**, which are deeply embedded assumptions and beliefs about the gender attributes and differences of individuals and/or groups (Fiske-Rusciano & Cyrus, 2005). Hence, gender, race, and class historically constitute fundamental categories that shape the American workforce as basic conduits for social inequalities between women and men (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Through the development of capitalism, for instance, men’s work included activities such as hunting, farming, and other forms of rigorous manual labor, while women spent much of their time occupied with domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, and making or mending clothes for the family (Lewis, 1999). These role distinctions between women and men existed from the earliest times of U.S. history.

Historical Overview of Gender and Diversity in the Workforce

During the pre-industrialization era, the diversity of the American workforce included African slaves, immigrant workers, and convicts who were primarily men, and they were the cornerstone of the agricultural labor market. The influence of sex and gender roles and stereotypes in the workforce impacted women's participation in the agricultural labor market. As the United States became industrialized, the need for labor increased, and the market consisted not only of immigrants but also rural Americans and very young women (Fullerton, 1993; Johnston & Packer, 1987; Kurowski, 2002). Management theorists, however, discounted the diversity of the workforce in the earlier periods and treated it as inconsequential assuming that a homogenous audience understood its role tacitly (Kurowski, 2002, p. 185). Several scholars argue that diversity in the workforce gained prominence because of the social, political, and economic changes that were occurring in the labor force (e.g., DiTomaso et al., 2007; Friedman & DiTomaso, 1996; Johnston & Packer, 1987).

The gradual presence of women in the diverse workforce, beginning as early as the 1900s, reveals that women desired **gender equality**—a social order in which women and men would share the same opportunities and the same constraints concerning full participation in both the economic and the domestic realms (Bailyn, 2006). In 1909, the first significant strike by working women, called “The Uprising of 20,000” (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2), was conducted by shirt-waist makers in New York who protested low wages and long working hours (Goodman, 1990).

Beginning some 30 years later, from 1940 to 1960, the number of working women and the proportion of working wives doubled. During World War II, large numbers of women entered the workforce, with Rosie the Riveter (see Figure 5.3) becoming a national symbol (Goodman, 1990). The earlier attempts to ignore diversity in the workforce in the management literature could not prevail, given the social transformation occurring in society. Although women workers were met with resistance, caution, and struggle, the workforce progressively began to reflect all people of diverse ethnicity and race.



Figure 5.1 The Uprising of 20,000 Slogan: “We’d rather starve quick than starve slow.”

Source: Library of Congress Print and Photographs Online Catalog

The notion of diversity in the workforce gained momentum in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement as more African Americans entered the workforce (Kurowski, 2002; Soni, 2000). The surge of African American workers meant that their increased presence and visibility could no longer be overlooked and that there was a need to study and understand the experiences and attitudes of culturally diverse workers (e.g., Ford, 1985; Fullerton, 1993). In the 1980s, the report *Workforce 2000* concluded that by the year 2000, “non-whites” would constitute 15% of the workforce as compared to 11% in 1970 (Johnston & Packer, 1987; Kurowski, 2002). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the non-Whites constituted 19% of the U.S. workforce in 2011 (Solis & Galvin, 2012).

It was not, however, until the late 1980s that diversity models emerged to respond to changing workplace needs (Soni, 2000). In fact, diversity models act as interventions and are a proactive approach to fully and equitably utilizing, integrating, and rewarding workers of



Figure 5.2 The Uprising of 20,000, International Ladies Garment Workers Union
Source: Library of Congress Print and Photographs Online Catalog

different racial/ethnic and gender backgrounds (Cox, 1993; Loden & Rosener, 1991; Sims & Dennehy, 1993; Soni, 2000). According to Soni (2000), “American workplaces appear to be more receptive to diversity in the workforce as they enter the 21st century, though its merits are being debated everywhere” (p. 395). Diversifying the workforce is an



Figure 5.3 Rosie the Riveter: American Women Working During World War II
Source: Library of Congress Print and Photographs Online Catalog



Figure 5.3 *(Continued)*

effort to address inequities between women and men; however, women overwhelmingly continue to face discrimination in the workplace.

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher (2009) define **gender discrimination** as “gendered-based behaviors, policies, and actions that adversely affect a person’s work by leading to unequal treatment or the creation of an intimidating environment because of one’s gender” (p. 342). Gender discrimination is also referred to as sexism (Heckman, 1998; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010) and “occurs when employers make decisions such as selection, evaluation, promotion, or reward allocation on the basis of an individual’s gender” (Sipe et al., 2009, p. 342). Prior to the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there was no legislation that prohibited gender discrimination. The U.S. government enacted both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to eradicate deeply entrenched patterns of discrimination in employment because of race, religion, sex, or national origin. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for the protection of pregnant females in the workforce.

Men confront gender issues (e.g., gender stereotypes and gender discrimination) in the workplace; however, research indicates that women face barriers far more often than do men (DeLaat, 2007). In a review of empirical studies, Ngo, Foley, Wong, and Loi (2003) identified four indicators of gender discrimination in the workplace: (a) women lag behind men in salary and salary advancement; (b) women’s rewards and work conditions (i.e., pay, autonomy, authority) are commonly less favorable than men’s; (c) women tend to work in dead-end jobs, resulting in lack of advancement; and (d) women are less likely than are men to use authority in the workplace (as cited in Sipe et al., 2009, p. 342). Gender discrimination can occur in various settings, but it happens much of the time in employment (e.g., gender wage gap and occupational sex segregation) (Ngo et al., 2003).

The **gender wage gap** is defined as the difference in earnings received by women and men for performing similar duties or tasks (Peterson & Morgan, 1995; Weichselbaumer & Winter-Ebmer, 2005). Historically, the pay gap between female and male workers was distinguished by level

of education and physical prowess, which earned men more income than women (Fry, 2009). M. J. Williams, Paluck, and Spencer-Rodgers (2010) attribute this early perspective, which is prevalent even today, to the stereotypical view of men as higher-wage earners than women. Men, in the early periods of American history, acquired more education than women, and their physical strength was viewed as superior (Fry, 2009; Peterson & Morgan, 1995; Weichselbaumer & Winter-Ebmer, 2005).

In addressing the wage gap disparities, in 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act to bridge the gender wage gap between women and men (Gibelman, 2003; Weichselbaumer & Winter-Ebmer, 2005). Additionally, the educational attainment of women beyond common schooling (i.e., K–12 level) has caused a realignment of the educational qualifications between women and men. Women now attend college at rates surpassing that of men (Fry, 2009; Peterson & Morgan, 1995; Weichselbaumer & Winter-Ebmer, 2005). The ratio of men attending college in October 2008 was 37%, while women’s attendance was 42.5% during that same period (Fry, 2009). Women today have more access to higher education, which increases their opportunities for earning higher income.

Although significant strides toward closing the gender wage gap have been achieved, pay inequality persists (Blau & Kahn, 2007) (see Figure 5.4).

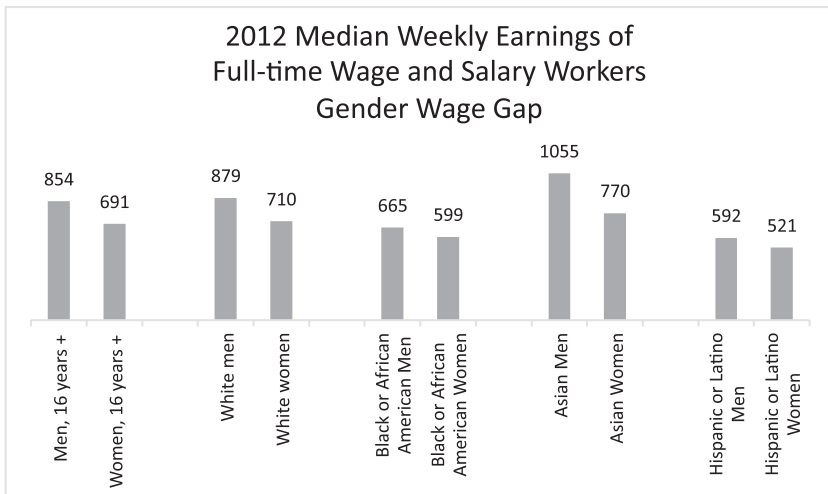


Figure 5.4 Despite New Laws, Gender Salary Gap Persists

Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Several factors account for the pay differences between the sexes. First, the number of women in lucrative, upper-level positions within organizations is few, and women tend to be concentrated in lower-echelon positions having limited opportunities for upward mobility (Alkadry & Tower, 2006). Similar gaps occur at lower-end wage and salary jobs. In a U.S. Census Report (2003), women who worked hourly had median hourly earnings of \$9.89, while men earned \$11.63 (p. 2). Second, women's average salaries are only a fraction of what is earned by men at all levels (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark, & Troske, 2003). Gaps in earnings between race and gender persist in contemporary statistics and in current analysis. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2011, the median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers were \$549 for Hispanics, \$615 for Blacks, \$775 for Whites, and \$866 for Asians. Among men, the earnings of Whites (\$856), Blacks (\$653), and Hispanics (\$571) were 88%, 67%, and 59%, respectively, of the earnings of Asians (\$970). The median earnings of White women (\$703), Black women (\$595), and Hispanic women (\$518) were 94, 79, and 69%, respectively, of the earnings of Asian women (\$751) (Solis & Galvin, 2012).

Finally, the side effects of supply and demand factors further drive salary differentials between men and women (Blau & Kahn, 2007). According to Blau and Kahn, an increase in the demand for jobs that require the skills in which men have more experience than women increases wage inequality.

A recent Presidential Proclamation (see Figure 5.5) by President Barack Obama declares National Equal Pay Day, garnering support for gender wage equality.

Occupational sex segregation is also associated with perpetuating the gender wage gap and refers to the concentrating of women and men into particular occupations (Mora & Ruiz-Castillo, 2004). For example, women tend to work in certain occupations, firms, and industries with other women more often than with men. Traditionally, organizations are based on norms and beliefs that are more frequently accommodating and adhered to by men than by women (van Vianen & Fischer, 2002). Oftentimes, women are excluded from male occupations because of men's social closure around these jobs (Levine, 2009;

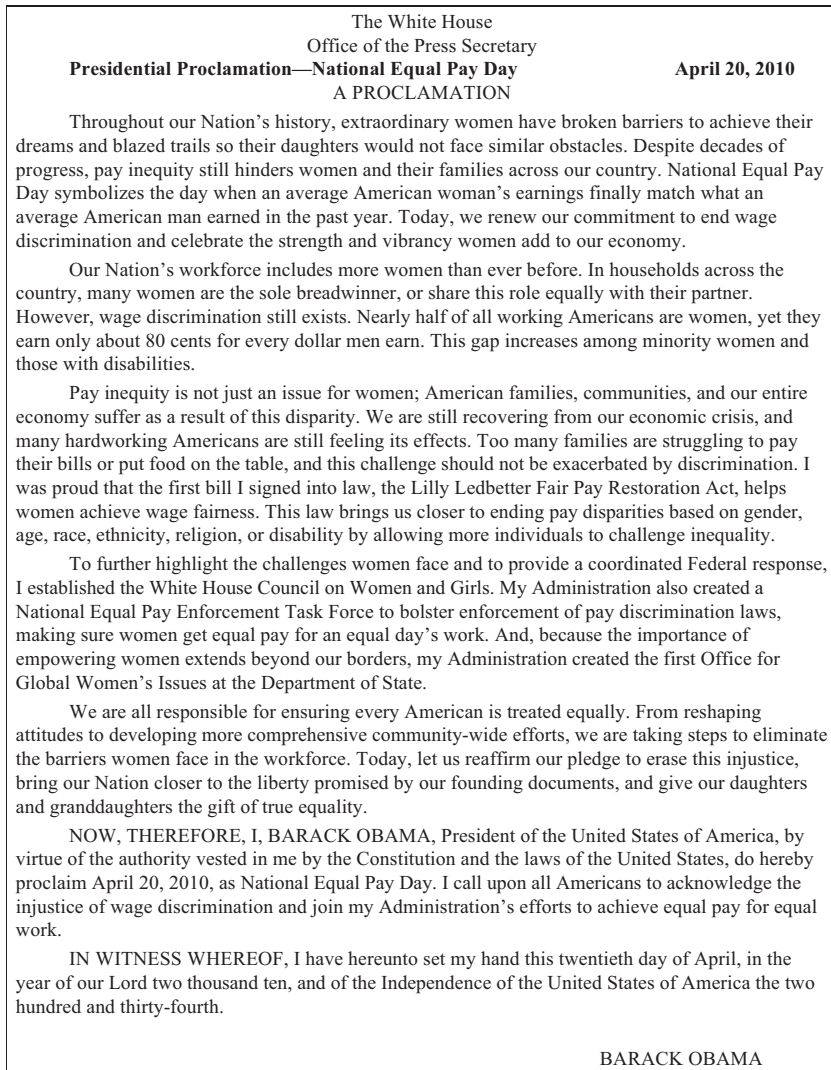


Figure 5.5 Presidential Proclamation—National Equal Pay Day

Source: Retrieved from: www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-proclamation-national-equal-pay-day

Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, 1999). The “good ol’ boys” network, as an example of social closure, hinders women’s access and entry to prominent positions occupied by men. Coupled with the male-dominated organizational culture is the leisurely progression of women in senior-level jobs. In 2009, only 13.5% or just 697 out of 5,161 Fortune 500 executive positions were held by women (Catalyst Inc., 2010; Healthfield, 2010). Fortune 500 corporate board seats held by women in 2009 were

just 15.2%, the same as in 2008, and just slightly higher than the 13% held in 2007 (Catalyst Inc., 2010; Healthfield, 2010). The underrepresentation of women in senior-level positions is further evident in the law profession, where women make up 46.7% of law students, but only 34.4% of active lawyers and 18.7% of the law-firm partners (Catalyst Inc., 2010). Most recent projections by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005) indicate that by 2014, more than 50% of all U.S. workers will be women. This increase has the potential to provide a tipping point that will positively transform organizations to level the playing field for women (Kalev, 2009).

The Myth of Equality: Glass Ceiling vs. Glass Escalator

In further exploration of occupational sex segregation, an examination of the “glass ceiling” and “glass escalator” effects provides further understanding of the prevailing inequalities between women and men in the workforce. In particular, women’s and men’s career opportunities in sex-segregated occupational contexts continue to perpetuate the “glass ceiling” effect, while men benefit from the “glass escalator” effect.

The term *glass ceiling* symbolizes barriers that are based on attitudinal or organizational bias preventing qualified women from advancing higher in their organizations (Danziger & Eden, 2007; Powell, 1999; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Danziger and Eden (2007) posit, “the glass-ceiling barrier sustains and reproduces occupational inequality between the sexes, even when individuals possess similar education, skills, and competence levels” (p. 130). Schilt’s (2006) synthesis of the scholarly literature concerning the pervasiveness of the glass ceiling depicts the disparities between women and men in white- and blue-collar workplaces in which women continue to trail behind in opportunities and advancement. In further support of the glass-ceiling effect, Davies-Netzley (1998) and Kalev (2009) contend that, in comparison to men, women continue to cluster near the bottom of organizational and professional hierarchies, receive lower wages, and have limited advancement opportunity in the workforce.

With the proliferation of women in the workforce in recent decades, women increasingly have acquired managerial and professional

occupations in various sectors (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Davies-Netzley, 1998). In 1999, Hewlett-Packard appointed Carleton Fiorina as CEO, the first female chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 company. Heralding the dismantling of the glass ceiling, Fiorina claimed that “women face no limits whatsoever. There is not a glass ceiling” (Meyer, 1999, p. 56). In the same year, Catalyst Inc. (1999), in a report on the experiences of women of color in corporate America, underscored the persistence of the glass ceiling and concluded that women of color suffer from greater underrepresentation than do majority-group women. While women like Carleton Fiorina have ascended to executive-level positions, they have “cracked” but not shattered the glass ceiling.

In recent work by Reece and Brandt (2008), they argue that, although a woman may hold a managerial and/or professional position, which “reflects a twenty-five year pattern of gain in education and job status,” women in general continue to be underrepresented in high-ranking jobs (p. 385). While executive-level positions are visible to women in the workplace, the glass ceiling phenomenon blocks their advancement and promotion. Further, women working in male-dominated fields such as business, medicine, law enforcement, and engineering face unfavorable treatment and impediments within organizational career mobility (Hultin, 2003). Attitudinal and organizational biases that persist, whether overtly or covertly, have economic consequences, both in lost productivity and turnover costs (Ragins, 1998). Women who face barriers in terms of advancement often leave to work in another organization or start their own business. While acknowledging the remarkable progress made by women in the workforce, Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) also criticize the discouragingly slow pace of women’s advancement to top-level positions in which “many women [are] jumping off, becoming frustrated, and disillusioned with the business world” (p. 127). Consequently, the maladaptive nature of organizations is inclusive of women but remain more accommodating to men (C.L. Williams, 2009).

Unlike women who bump up against the glass ceiling in the workforce, men ride the “glass escalator” to ascend the hierarchy specifically within female-dominated organizations. The term *glass escalator*, coined by the sociologist Christine Williams (1992, 1995) refers to

the promotion of men over women into management in female-dominated positions such as nursing, social work, elementary school teaching, and librarianship (Hultin, 2003; C. L. Williams, 1992, 1995). C. L. Williams (1992) contends that throughout the 20th century, these fields have been identified as women's work. According to Hultin (2003), "men in these positions are able to ride a 'glass escalator' up the internal career ladders and at a speed that their female counterparts can hardly enjoy" (p. 31). In female-dominated lines of work, men escape negative consequences of tokenism and are treated advantageously by employers, employees, and coworkers (C.L. Williams, 1992). The cultural reproduction of men's advantages in the workforce is "not a function of simply one process but rather a complex interplay between many factors such as gender differences in workplace performance evaluation, gendered beliefs about men's and women's skills and abilities, and differences between family and child care obligations of women and men workers" (Schilt, 2006, p. 468).

While women are disadvantaged in male-dominated workplaces, men benefit from their status in female-dominated fields. In particular, the pay structure of men in female-dominated professions favors men (Budig, 2002). Cognard-Black (2004) asserts that "gender as a major structural stratification mechanism privileges men in various setting compositions" (p.134). Such is the case in female-dominated lines of work in which the glass-escalator hypothesis rests on notions of discriminatory processes in the workplace (Hultin, 2003). The glass escalator provides a dual benefit for men, a patriarchal dividend or the advantages men in general gain from the subordination of women in the workforce (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Whether in male-dominated or female-dominated fields, men are accorded prestige and outpace women in advancement to positions of authority and pay (Schilt, 2006).

A recent trend garnering scholarly interest is the large number of men entering female-dominated fields. Sally Lindsay (2007) has coined this as the **masculinization of women's work**, meaning the movement of men into women's occupations. An example of this is in the field of nurse anesthesia. According to Lindsay (2007), the nurse anesthesia field has "evolved from a low-status, women's specialty to a high-status profession where males comprise nearly half of all the

employees” (p. 429). The masculinization of women’s work is a process of gender transformation in which more men are present in such fields as nurse anesthesia, and the occupation comes to be viewed as men’s work (Lindsay, 2007; Lupton, 2006). Through the transformation process, the female-dominated field goes through three stages: infiltration, invasion, and takeover (Bradley, 1993). While Bradley’s typologies provide a descriptive process, Lindsay (2007) argues that they do not fully capture why the process evolves. Lindsay (2007) offers four key themes that explain what draws men into these professions:

1. First, during times of social and political change, men are inclined to enter women’s work for security or because they have few other alternatives.
2. A second factor identified in the masculinization of work is pay and opportunity to move up the career ladder quickly.
3. Changes in work conditions are a third factor influencing the masculinization of an occupation.
4. A fourth and related factor in the movement of men into women’s jobs is the technological change. . . . Once a job becomes more technically oriented, men tend to gain a foothold (pp. 431–432).

These four factors illuminate the gradual masculinization of women’s work and have implications about the maintenance and reinforcement of the glass escalator. Furthermore, what is yet to be studied in this area of inquiry is the socializing influence female-dominated fields over time may have on men. The myth of equality (i.e., glass ceiling and glass escalator) suggests that discrimination does not exist; however, it coexists with sexual harassment in the workplace.

Contemporary Issues for Women and Men in the Workforce

Demographic shifts in the workforce have significantly changed how American women and men view their roles both inside and outside of the work environment. In recent years, women’s employment has multiplied considerably, and sociologists attribute the increased proportion of women in the workforce to the need for two-paycheck households due to the decline in men’s wages (England, 2005, p. 265). The exodus of women from the home and their entry into the workforce has

caused a shift in the traditional role of women and men at work and home. These changes introduced different gender issues to the United States workforce, including an increase in dual-couple earners and female breadwinners. At the beginning of the 21st century, only a third of U.S. households were traditional in that the husband provided the primary income through paid work, and the wife managed the home and children (Chapman, 2004). While this percentage of U.S. households fit the sole-male-earner model, approximately a third more had a female as the primary or sole earner (U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004, 2008). The presence of dual-couple earners, female breadwinners, and the younger generations X and Y in the workforce has fueled female and male workers' requests for more autonomy over their work responsibilities in order to better accommodate their personal lives (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). The introduction of work–life balance initiatives was a response to employees' request.

Work–Life Balance

The term *work–life balance* refers to the equilibrium between the amount of time and effort individuals commit to work- and nonwork-related activities (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). The way in which individuals balance their work and nonwork lives is a central issue in business practices and in academic inquiry, particularly in disciplines such as organizational studies, gender studies, and sociological perspectives (Mescher, Benschop, & Doorewaard, 2010; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). In this country, the work–life field began in the late 1970s when Americans exhibited increased mental and physical stress based on limited job autonomy and lack of support for an overall quality of life (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). Such workplace findings signaled the need for the development of a mutually beneficial balance between organizations' expectations and employees' desires.

Although terms such as work–personal life integration, work–life articulation, and work–personal life harmonization (Crompton & Brockmann, 2007; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitee, 2002) have emerged in recent research and take into account a broader range of nonwork activities, the term *work–family balance* is most commonly used in the literature. However, by concentrating on

employees with family responsibilities, work–family balance programs in organizations have encountered criticism from some employees who do not have children and, thus, do not have parental commitments (Haar & Spell, 2003). Another criticism of the term work–life balance is the word “balance,” which suggests the presence of a static equilibrium that is achievable between paid employment and a life outside the job.

Work–Life Balance Initiatives

One way in which organizations address contemporary issues is through work–life balance initiatives (see Figure 5.6). The fundamental aim of work–life balance practice and policies is to enable employees to manage work and caregiving (Kossek et al., 2010). Such initiatives consist primarily of flexible working practices and family-friendly policies, although good practice demonstrates flexibility as being considerate of all workers, including those without caregiver responsibilities.

Caregiving Options: Finding adequate care for children while parents work is a problem faced by many employed women and men and is considered the primary reason employees need work–life balance

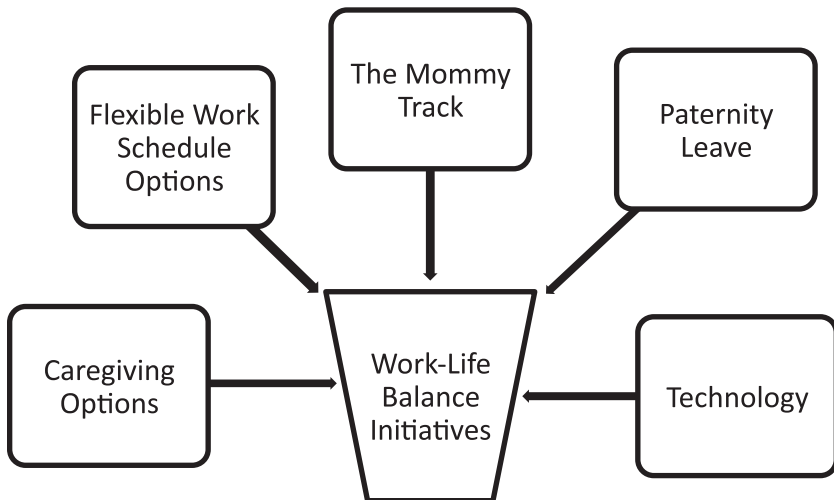


Figure 5.6 Work–Life Balance Initiatives

programs (Kossek et al., 2010; C. L. Williams, 2009). Employees who cannot balance the demands of work with available childcare are often disciplined or fired (Reese & Brandt, 2008). A salient role of work–life balance strategies is to focus on ways that working mothers and fathers can care for their children while maintaining employment. Some organizations provide subsidized on-site childcare centers for employees. Caring obligations extend beyond children and often include ageing parents and ailing family members. Employers increasingly recognize the difficulties of generational family problems.

A perspective considered less in the literature is that men are finding new opportunities to increase involvement with their families, thus shifting the narrow gender role of the male as primary wage earner (Perrone et al., 2009). Also changing is the increase in stay-at-home fathers. Responses of 70 interviewed fathers reveal that most of them worked part time, studied part time, or considered the time away from work as a way to create another form of work (Doucet, 2004). According to Perrone et al. (2009), as parents adapt to new careers and family roles, problems can occur. For instance, Brescoll and Uhlmann (2005) studied attitudes toward nontraditional parents and found that stay-at-home fathers and employed mothers were viewed more negatively than stay-at-home mothers and employed fathers. Additionally, for stay-at-home fathers, perceived social respect and regard was low. For employed mothers, however, perceived social respect and regard was just as high as for parents in traditional roles, which according to the researchers, may be attributed to women gaining social respect and regard by taking on the traditional male breadwinner role (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005).

Flexible Work Schedule Options: To assist employees with a balance between their personal and work lives, some companies make available flexiblework schedule arrangements, which include “flextime” options typically offering employees some choice on arrival and departure times (Reece & Brandt, 2008). The compressed work week is another flexible work choice and usually consists of four 10-hour days. Job-sharing arrangements involve two employees who share the responsibilities of one position. The benefit of this arrangement is that one employee might work during the mornings and the other during the afternoon.

Part-time jobs are another means of flexible scheduling. Many women with children secure part-time, rather than full-time, jobs (Cohen, 1999) because they often have the major responsibility for children and may not wish to or might be unable to work traditional, less flexible, and sometimes excessive work hours and schedules (Bailyn, 2006). Unfortunately, part-time jobs are customarily accompanied by “low pay, no benefits, no security, limited autonomy, and virtually no opportunities for advancement” (C. L. Williams, 2009, p. 290).

The Mommy Track: Some organizations have created the **mommy track** position with the idea of providing an opportunity for working mothers to devote time to both careers and families. However, critics of the initiative describe it as punitive because working mothers are forced to choose between developing a career or having a family and a career. If women select the latter choice, then they are relegated to a career path that is considered low status, excluding women from important projects. They also receive lower pay and generally feel ignored by their busier, career-oriented male or female counterparts. Further, studies reveal that mothers experience a per-child wage penalty of about 5% (England, 2005). Whereas the literature highlights work–life balance initiatives that address the needs of mothers in the workplace, better workplace accommodations are warranted.

Paternity Leave: **Paternity leave** is another work–life balance benefit and refers to a period of time that a father is legally allowed to be away from his job to spend time with his child. According to Halverson (2003), men use work–life balance initiatives much less than women do. He asserts that fathers who want to take paternity leave or time away from work to care for children often experience difficulty under the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). He argues that Congress had the best interests of women, rather than men, in mind when passing the Act. Such a claim reinforces “gender discrimination” in the workplace, which not only impacts women but men also. Additionally, some men fear workplace discrimination and work-related penalties should they rely on the FMLA for extended paternity leave. Like women who have battled maternity-related issues, men also must advocate for **family-friendly workplace** (FFW) policies, which

Hartin (1994) describes as procedures “designed to minimize the impact of work on family life” (p. 76). Important to the discourse on working men and women is the integration of work and family.

As the work–family literature suggests, a number of traditional gender role expectations persist despite the shift in who becomes the primary earner within the family. For example, research in the United States has found that when a husband is economically dependent on his wife, over time he actually does less housework than before (Brines, 1994). Similarly, Bittman, Thompson, and Hoffmann (2004) found that when wives in the United States earn 51% to 100% of household income, the couple tends to retain or return to the traditional gendered divisions of home labor. Managing the responsibilities associated with work and nonwork life continues to pose a challenge for many employed individuals.

Technology: The technology option is valuable to some women and men who want to strike a balance between family and work responsibilities. Telecommuting permits employees to work from home at a personal computer that is linked to their employer’s computer system and includes other innovations to perform business away from the traditional office such as laptops, wireless phones, and Internet access to e-mail. Today’s multigenerational workforce presents varied work styles and worker preferences. For instance, Generation X workers (born between 1960 and 1980) prefer to use technology when it offers them less stringent work hours to allow for greater work–life balance (Glass, 2007). In contrast, Generation Y workers (born between 1980 and 2000) are the first generation born into a technologically based world (Smola & Sutton, 2002) and generally favor instant messaging, text messaging, and e-mails rather than having a face-to-face conversation or using the telephone (Glass, 2007).

Limitations of Work–Life Balance Strategies

Although work–life balance strategies aim to improve the relationship between the work and personal lives of employees, they can make work intense and perpetuate stereotypes of ideal workers who are employees “unencumbered” by family or other nonworking responsibilities

(Kossek et al., 2010, p. 9). These researchers argue that organizations and scholars need to frame work–life balance initiatives as part of the “core employment systems to enhance organizational effectiveness,” rather than strategies to support disadvantaged, nonideal workers such as those who use the system because they do not have an income to employ outside help. Additionally, women predominantly appear to use the option, which indicates that flexible working is implicitly seen as an issue of concern for mothers. In short, “[u]ntil work-life initiatives become more mainstream, a right and not a privilege limited to those individuals most in need of care giving assistance, they will continue to be marginalized” (Kossek et al., 2010). Stone (2007) concurs with Kossek’s sociological argument and asserts:

Until more men themselves take advantage of [workplace policies], or at least, as senior managers, permit and do not punish those who do, reduced-hour and flexible accommodations are likely to remain stigmatized and under-utilized, in a never-ending chase-the-tail scenario that rebounds to women’s disadvantage. (p. 225)

Hewlett (2007) tempers both Kossek’s and Stone’s argument with an economic explanation, which asserts that corporations will implement flexible policies that accommodate working mothers only when they are convinced that such policies are in their economic interest to do so. Women and men continue to grapple with their work and personal demands. Although some progressive organizations are implementing work–life balance practices, additional accommodations are essential to better address the contemporary roles of women and men.

Chapter Summary

In the 21st century, women and men continue to experience inequality due to gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles in the workforce (Reece & Brandt, 2008). Specifically, these gender roles are in question because more women are educated and entering the workplace. Although women historically have struggled to ascend to senior-level positions, women are increasingly gaining access to professional and managerial positions in organizations. Accordingly, the gap between

women and men in salary compensation appears to be narrowing; however, men still consistently out-earn women. Much of the literature identifies gender discrimination as the culprit for the persistent gender wage gap in addition to the masculinization of women's work.

Research studies indicate that women are disadvantaged in comparison with men on nearly every known economic indicator. Such instances of gender discrimination extend beyond wages and include underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and men performing traditional women's work, for example, nursing, elementary teaching, social work, and librarianship (Hultin, 2003). The disparity between women and men in management careers is often attributed to the glass ceiling, which blocks opportunities for women (Danziger & Eden, 2007). In contrast to women who push against the glass ceiling in the workforce, men cruise the glass escalator, which promotes them over women into management positions in female-dominated fields (Hultin, 2003; C. L. Williams, 1992, 1995).

Finally, research findings suggest that women and men in today's workforce seek successful careers in addition to a balanced personal life. Some employers have responded to employees' needs with initiatives featuring family-friendly policies that emphasize flexible work schedules, caregiving options, and technological arrangements. Some researchers (England, 2005; Kossek et al., 2010; Stone, 2007) contend that women and men who utilize work-life benefits are perceived to be less serious about their careers and therefore are often marginalized in the organization. In contrast, men and women who have a balanced professional and personal life are likely to be more productive in the workplace, which is a benefit for organizations.

The chapter calls attention to the importance of further examination of women's experience in the U.S. workforce given that they are disproportionately affected by gender inequality and discrimination in the workplace. Despite laws, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended in 1991, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963 enacted to protect workers from overt discrimination, gender inequalities continue to exist in the workforce. Further, an understanding of the workplace culture as it affects the career development and retention of both women and men provides insight on the pervasive issues of gender discrimination. Minimizing the effect of gender discrimination may generate

organizational benefits with regard to increased satisfaction, retention, and advancement of workers (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Gender inequality and discrimination in the U.S. workforce will require unremitting attention at the individual, organizational, and federal levels.

Definition of Key Terms

Family-friendly workplace policies—Refers to procedures designed to minimize the impact of work on family life.

Flexible work schedule options—Includes flextime choices, typically offering employees some choice on arrival and departure times such as a *compressed work week* that usually consists of four 10-hour days and *job-sharing arrangements*, which involve two employees who share the responsibilities of one position.

Gender—The social construction of differences between women and men and the social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male.

Gender discrimination—Connotes gender-based behaviors, policies, and actions that adversely affect a person's work by leading to unequal treatment or the creation of an intimidating environment because of one's gender.

Gender equality—Implies a social order in which women and men share the same opportunities and the same constraints concerning full participation in both the economic and the domestic realms.

Gender roles—Represent traditional beliefs about what functions are appropriate for women and men.

Gender stereotypes—Deeply embedded assumptions and beliefs about the gender attributes and differences of individuals and/or groups.

Gender wage gap—The difference in earnings received by women and men for performing similar duties or tasks.

Glass ceiling—Symbolizes barriers that are based on attitudinal or organizational biases preventing qualified women from advancing higher in their organizations.

Glass escalator—Symbolizes the promotion of men over women into management in female-dominated positions such as nursing, social work, elementary school teaching, and librarianship.

Good ol' boys network—An example of social closure, which can hinder women's access and entry to prominent positions occupied by men.

Masculinization of women's work—The movement of men into women's occupations.

Mommy track—Denotes a position that some organizations have created with the idea of providing an opportunity for working mothers to devote time to both careers and families.

Occupational sex segregation—The concentrating of women and men into particular occupations.

Paternity leave—A period of time that a father is legally allowed to be away from his job to spend time with his child.

Sex—The binary categories of female and male.

Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origins.

Work–life balance—The equilibrium between the amount of time and effort individuals commit to work- and nonwork-related activities.

Critical-Thinking Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do traditional gender roles perpetuate gender inequality and/or inhibit the quest toward equality in the workforce?
 2. What kind of problems can occur as a result of the changing role of women and men in careers and family life?
 3. What was the principal intent of the enactment of Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Equal Pay Act of 1963?
 4. What is your perspective on Sally Lindsay's concept of the masculinization of women's work? Does this concept represent progress toward equality in the workforce? What factors influence men's entry in female-dominated fields?
 5. Compare and contrast glass escalator and glass ceiling.
 6. In what ways do organizations develop and sustain norms and beliefs that are more accommodating to men than women?
 7. How can employees sustain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives?
-

Additional Assignments

1. As women and men grapple with deciphering their changing roles at work and at home, online resources may prove useful to them. Websites developed by professional organizations like the National Association of Female Executives (www.nafe.com), the Families and Work Institute (www.familiesandwork.org), and At-Home Dad (www.athomedad.com) offer sound support. Visit the site of your choice and write an analysis of how it might help individuals make an

educated decision about their personal and professional life choices. Share your findings with class members. (Adapted from Reece and Brandt, 2008.)

2. Identify an organization in your area and schedule an interview with someone in the Human Resources Department to learn about its family-friendly programs. Inquire about the benefits working mothers *and* fathers receive as a result of such initiatives. Write a 1- to 2-page paper describing your interview findings. Present your report to class members. (Adapted from Reese and Brandt, 2008.)

Case Study: Work–Life Balance

Marsha is a 34-year-old, highly competitive, technology-savvy single parent who works around the clock, taking work home from the office, reviewing global markets while preparing dinner, and reading to her six-year-old son before she finally goes to sleep. Further, when Marsha awakens each weekday morning, she commutes one hour each way from her home in a Chicago suburb to her downtown office in Chicago. Currently, Marsha is considering a position at a Fortune 500 health care company. Having experienced the fast pace, long hours, and frequent travel associated with a senior-level position, Marsha has reservations about accepting the recently offered executive-level position. Additionally, Marsha has recently established a serious goal of better balancing her personal and professional responsibilities. In anticipation of upcoming negotiations with the prospective employer, Marsha's executive coach has advised her to develop a list of questions that will assist Marsha in making a decision about the position.

Discussion Questions

1. What work–life balance initiatives might Marsha ask about during negotiations with her prospective employer?
2. What is the basic aim of work–life balance policies and practice?
3. Although Marsha is a parent and wants to divide her attention between work and nonwork commitments, why might she want to avoid the “mommy track?”

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DIVERSITY
IN THE
WORKFORCE

CURRENT ISSUES AND
EMERGING TRENDS

MARILYN Y. BYRD
AND CHAUNDA L. SCOTT

ROUTLEDGE



Diversity in the Workforce

Diversity in the Workforce is a comprehensive, integrated teaching resource providing students with the tools and methodologies they need to negotiate effectively the multicultural workplace, and to counter issues of discrimination and privilege.

Written from an American perspective, the book not only covers the traditional topics of race, gender, ethnicity, and social class, but moves beyond this to explore emerging trends around ‘isms’ (racism, sexism) as well as transgender issues, spirituality, intergenerational workforce tensions, cross-cultural teams, physical appearance stigmatizing, visible and invisible disabilities, and racial harassment. The book:

- Presents theoretical models to help students think critically about the issues that emerge from workforce diversity;
- Includes a historical perspective that explains the roots of the issues in the workplace today;
- Covers potential legal and ethical issues;
- Introduces a social justice paradigm to encourage social action;
- Illustrates strategies organizations are using to leverage diversity effectively.

With end-of-chapter questions encouraging students to engage in difficult conversations and case studies to stimulate students’ awareness of the real problems and issues that emerge from diversity, this book will help students develop the critical, analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills they need to mediate or resolve diversity issues as future professionals.

Marilyn Y. Byrd is an assistant professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, USA. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in human resource management, organizational behavior, managerial communications, and business ethics. She is also on the steering committee for the Culture and Diversity Special Interest Group at the Academy of Human Resource Development.

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Diversity in the Workforce

Current Issues and Emerging Trends

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