Challenges facing minorities achieving executive positions

The paper analyzes the problems and challenges women and minorities face in achieving executive positions. Over the years and in today's working world woman and minorities face many issues preventing them from achieving careers as executives and leaders in many company's. This paper discusses the challenges faced, how the government has attempted to alleviate those challenges, possible strategic measure to overcome those challenges, demographic changes that can influence employers, and how diversity and discrimination by employers have been detrimental to women and minorities career advancements.

Challenges faced by Women and Minorities in achieving executive positions.

History shows women in the past were for the most part homemakers and the men where the ones who went out and worked. Today women have to balance work, family, and other activities in their lives. Women today must face stiff opposition in a male oriented working world to achieve executive positions and advance up the career ladder. In " 1986 women faced what is called a glass ceiling in reference to upward lack of mobility" (Dean, Mills-Strachan, Roberts, Carraher, Cash, 2009, p. 1).

Mello (2006) states in " 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which prohibited wage discrimination based on sex or gender for jobs that require equal skill, effort and responsibility" (p. 300). Despite a change of over 45 years and the pay act of 1963, women and minorities are still make 50 % to 70% less than men in similar positions are.

Barah, Cranston, and Craske (2008) states although women begin their careers with " the knowledge, intelligence, and commitment to working as men but few ever reach achieving top jobs" (p. 1). Women and minorities need to apply all resources available such as knowledge, intelligence, other strengths, along with governmental discrimination Acts and laws to pursue their goals. It is important in today's leaders, especially women to learn to balance all aspects in their lives; women generally have varied responsibilities – working, families, and other that require a piece of their time and energy.

Collins (2009) discusses the challenges of African American women in achieving executive positions. Collins (2009) states " 75% of the executives surveyed states having minorities in senior executive positions is an asset" p. 1). American women have a difficult time in achieving leadership positions; this is due in part to preconceived ideas on women's abilities in executive positions and the work force balance that affect women. African American women who have obtained senior executives interviewed stated they believed several factors played a part in them having issues and trouble with obtaining their positions – " 1) lack of strong strategic networks, 2) consistent undervaluing of ability, 3) tough choices of work-life balance, 4) prejudice regarding work style, and 5) overcoming barriers requires initiative" (Collins, 2009, p. 2-3).

Chloe (2010) states, many of the largest corporations such as " Apple, Citigroup, Delta Airlines, Exxon Mobil, Pepsi, Radio Shack , Sysco" (p. 1) and others in the United States have several things in common including not having one woman in a CEO position. Chloe (2010) states a survey

conducted and released in 2010 revealed " 14. 4% of the executive officer positions at Fortune 500 company's were women, an increase by 1. 1% over 2009″ (p. 1). These figures indicate there is a very slim chance of recruiting more women or minorities because men set the goals and makes the decisions in most companies today; this can hinder the growth and future of a company and gives only one perspective on how to be proactive and develop strategic management policies for the company. Having a member of a minority and/or a woman on the board or having input with decisions would help a company to develop strategic policies and innovative ideas that can reach all the employees or customer population.

Lanier (n. d.) states in " 1950 only one in three women participated in the labor force, by 1998 three in five, and then by 2003 approximately 60% of all women aged sixteen and older were in the work force" (p. 1). It is estimated the number of women working will continue to climb. In the past men were expected to hold the top company positions and women kept the home going or working in lower company positions. Lanier (n. d.) states employment for women is not increasing but it is thought the number of minorities will continue to increase, especially in Hispanic males. Traditional jobs for women included those in retail businesses but businesses owned by women have steadily increased.

Sunderland (2009) states although women have come a long way in the businesses world, they are still being overlooked as board of directors for company's and women's talents wasted. Sunderland (2009) stated, " UK boardrooms are still overwhelmingly mail-dominated. Women occupy only 242 out of 2, 742 seats on the boards of FTSE 350 company's" (p. 1).

Sunderland (2009) states " John Reizenstein, managing director of Co-operative Asset Management believes women and minorities should be represented in the board room and in top positions but having them in these positions may not make good business sense, the business world may not ready" (p. 2). Until the biases and male dominated ideas change it will be difficult for women or minorities to advance to higher positions within a company, moving up the ladder in the organization, and beyond the invisible biased glass ceiling blocking their way.

Gender equality, discrimination, cultural diversity, and Government Intervention to ensure fairness for Women and Minorities in Business

de Morsella, (2009) states many corporations and organizations attempt to project that minorities are not discriminated against and equal opportunities are available for all employees but in most cases, this is far from the truth. In " reality minorities have been able to climb into lower or middle class management positions but experience roadblocks when attempting to reach their full potential" (p. 1). In many company's department heads or supervisors keep an eye on minorities to see what they are capable of doing, while " white male peers are on the fast track early in their careers" (de Morsella, 2009, p. 1). In many cases, the only way a minority gains an executive position is when a company that either needs or wants to balance or increase their company diversity within the work place. Company's that receive government financing through grants or other, must prove that the employee staffing is diversified.

Ren and Yunxia (2010) states, ” the pay gap between men and women has narrowed in recent decades as the participation of women in the labor marked has increased, with women in high paying positions increasing from 24% in 1980 to 42% in 2006″ (p. 93). Ren and Yunxia (2010) stated although the number of women in high paying positions have increased, women are still paid lower wages than males in same or similar positions.

Fanlund (2006) states, the key to being a successful leader or manager is being able to “ view things from a variety of perspectives, he states in January 1, 2005 statistics showed 75 percent of new hires were women or minorities” (p. 1). Fanlund (2006) states company’s that want to succeed in today’s working world must learn that women and minorities have the abilities, knowledge, and skills to be successful managers and leaders; the gender and racial biases of the past have no place in today’s world. One of the key issues facing women surveyed in 2006 in executive positions was the ability to adequately delegate subordinates. The women surveyed advised they worked hard to work their way up the ranks, surpassing others in the company. The female managers found it hard to trust prior work mates they now manage due to jealousy or biases Fanlund (2006) states ten traits are found in successful male and female leaders: “ 1) team building skills, 2) mentoring, 3) consulting, 4) networking, 5) supporting, 6) rewarding, 7) problem solving, 8) influencing upward, 9) inspiring, and 10) delegating” (p. 1).

Hewlett and Rashid (2010) states, career women are facing issues in being able to advance due to cultural norms. One intelligent woman in the “ United Arab Emirates had to decline a promotion in the company she worked was

employed. This was due to her culture which would not allow a single woman to board a plane or stay alone in a hotel unless a male relative was with her, causing her to be unable to attend training in the United States" (Hewlett and Rashid, 2010, p. 101). In other insistences, women have been the target of biases and medieval ideas on motherhood; the belief that women who have children should stay home and raise the children, forgoing a working career until the children is grown. Over the past ten years in all countries, women have saturated the higher education facilities to make " 65 percent of the college graduates in UAE, 60 percent in Brazil, 47 percent in China, and 86 percent in Russia" (Hewlett and Rashid, 2010, p. 102). Although, women hold graduate degrees they are still not in the top percent of employees holding manager or executive positions in companies. Some causes can be blamed on: 1) oversees countries culture, 2) male biases, and 3) the balance between personal time, work, and other responsibilities.

Wolfe (n. d.) states the economy of the United States would benefit from women making better pay. Based on statistics " in 2006, 41 percent of women were their families sole source of income and women contribute 83 percent of the gross national product" (Wolfe, n. d., p. 1). Unfortunately since the Equal Pay Act in 1963 and Fair Pay Restoration Act in 2009 the pay for women is " narrowing only a half percent per year, with inflation and cost of living increase" (Wolfe, n. d., p. 2) women are not gaining any headway in equal pay. Company's need to develop policies that enable women and men to balance personal and work without censorship; if personnel are happier and able to balance their responsibilities retention will increase and a company will maintain qualified personnel who understand the organizations

day to day functions, needs, and activities. Training new personnel takes time and energy that can be used to help a company reach its goals and be proactive.

Strategies Women and Minorities can use to ensure equality

Collins (2009) states one-strategy women and minorities can use to help them " overcome the barriers are to accept a position in industries or corporations that values diversity and has demonstrated proof of it" (p. 3). Collins (2009) advised woman or members of minority should conduct research to determine which organizations or corporations have a diverse employee list, including in the company's departments mangers or executive staff, because this will give insight into future potential avenues.

de Morsella, (2009) states there are several strategies women and minorities can do to achieve success in obtaining executive positions: 1) develop a plan and determine what position is desired for their career advancement, basically what job do they want, 2) be persistent in pursuing your career desires, 3) determine what type of work is right and enjoyable, 4) work toward being visible through volunteering to work on projects, learn the skills necessary for desired positions, market yourself, 5) learn how to be a good problem solver, 6) learn how to deal with discrimination on the job in a professional manner, 7) pay attention to possible obstacles, 8) learn to use culture diversity as a tool for advancement instead of detriment, blend in with the company employees, 9) learn to determine which battles are worth fighting, and 10) make sure expectations are realistic.

Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) states " a 360 degree assessment of women advancing in the business world and lingering biases on women's abilities out shown men in leadership dimensions but when it came to envisioning now opportunities and environmental trends women were degrees behind men" (p. 62). Women interviewed stated understanding the business and all its details are key to being a successful executive. Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) states women need to be visionaries, they need to learn to pay attention to their environment, look for opportunities, be prepared, and proactive. The same as company's can utilize a SWOT analysis, a person wanting to advance and get ahead can do the same: develop a strategic game plan, evaluate their strengths, recognize their weaknesses, look for opportunities, and any threats that will hinder their ability to advance, and learn to use their strengths to overcome weaknesses.

Thomas and Gabarro (2011) states, " every major corporation in America has hired people of color who possessed raw ambition, intelligence, and interpersonal acumen, yet relatively few companies have produced minorities from their own ranks who have made it into the executive level" (p. 1-2). This indicates there is a problem with the internal biases or personalities in a company. A company that hires minorities from external sources is overlooking the potential of intelligence and skills of internal minorities. Many times minorities experience the biases and fail to fully express their intelligence, skills, and abilities due to projected internal biases. The minority believes their ability to advance is hindered, causing decreased ambition, resulting in being overlooked for higher executive positions. In some cases, minority persons were initially hired in lower staff

positions to comply with diversity strategies, where they remain; this is in violation in the discrimination act. Minorities can help themselves by researching the company thoroughly for staffing diversity and prior documented diversity issues.

Conclusion

Dean, Mills-Strachan, Roberts, Carraher, Cash, (2009) states mentoring is one way woman and minorities could benefit; mentoring offers advise, guidance, " psychological and career support" (p. 3). Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010) states women need more than knowledge, skills, education, and ability to get a head in today's working world, they need a good mentor that can guide them through the channels and help with establishing the network connections necessary to advance. Although, having successful mentors whose function is to help women advance, the mentors are pushing too hard and causing many women to second guess their choices and/or take a position with another company for less stress. Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010) states statistics show between " 2008 and 2010 15 % more men received promotions than women who were mentored; these where based on similar numbers of lateral moves in jobs. More men than women state their mentors helped them plan their moves and take charge in their new roles" (p. 83).