

Reinvigorating Research on Gender in the Workplace Using a Positive Work and Organizations Perspective

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Gender inequality is a widespread organizational challenge, however, research on gender in the workplace suffers from stagnation in mainstream management research. A positive work and organizations perspective has the capacity to augment problem-focused gender research with new approaches to boosting gender equity. Yet, contributions that utilize such a perspective are sparsely spread across nearly two decades' time and dozens of journals with differing disciplinary foci. This paper aims to reinvigorate gender research in management research by consolidating insights that have emerged through the application of a positive perspective. Therefore, we systematically review articles published in 21 management and psychological journals between 2001 and 2016. Four main themes emerged as drivers of gender research from a positive perspective: performance, social integration, well-being, and justice/moral matters. The contributions within these themes highlight pathways to organizational flourishing through positive diversity and inclusion behaviors and practices. Thus, this paper provides a conceptual map for navigating and planning further research.

Introduction

Gender equality is one of the top five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 (United Nations 2019), and is deemed to be a 'grand challenge' in management – a critical barrier, which if addressed, has the capacity for immense global impact (George *et al.* 2016). Particularly in the United States, owing to consistent efforts to combat gender inequality over the last few decades, some outcomes for women have improved considerably.

However, issues of inequity are nuanced. Unequal treatment of women is experienced in the backdrop of a labor market in which women¹ occupy 47% of the workforce, own 9.9 million businesses, and hold director positions in 72% of US technology companies (U.S. Census Bureau 2012; Warner 2014). In this complex landscape, the burgeoning presence of women challenges strongly entrenched androcentric structures and patriarchal norms in the workplace, and it simultaneously opens space for new possibilities of being, relating, and performing in organizations.

This paper was supported by a small internal research grant from Western Washington University. Special thanks to Brendan Sorenson for administrative support, Michael Warren, Jason Kanov, Tejvir Sekhon, Natalie Sappleton, Skylar Powell, and three anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback on previous drafts of this manuscript.

¹We do not intend to imply a binary (i.e. female or male) framework of gender, or exclude gender non-conforming or transgender individuals. However, the literature on gender equity is dominated by a focus on *women's* marginalization. Therefore, we restrict our discussion to issues concerning women's and men's experiences as a point of contrast in this paper.

The nuances and complexities of workplace gender inequality are not well served by the theoretical and ontological paradigms that dominate the extant literature. Over-reliance on long-standing theoretical paradigms (e.g. stereotyping; Ely 1995) opens few avenues for new research and may have stifled practice innovations (Joshi *et al.* 2015). For example, a major focus of the existing literature is on explicit, visible, and overt forms of discrimination (e.g. lack of numeric representation of women on corporate boards). Although these are important indicators of inequity, progress made on these fronts is erroneously proclaimed as evidence that gender equity has been achieved. Overt discrimination, however, is increasingly being replaced by implicit and interpersonal forms, which are easier to deny, yet just as detrimental to women (Jones *et al.* 2016). Valuing of socio-emotional skills, where women are perceived to have a clear advantage, prematurely reinforces the sense that the gender inequality problem has largely been solved (Broadbridge and Simpson 2011). This intensifies the tendency to dismiss remaining disparities as consequences of differences in merit and choice (e.g. blaming women's poor negotiation skills for salary disparities), rather than structural inequalities and unconscious bias (e.g. the double-bind of women suffering hostility when they negotiate and being short-changed when they do not) (Bowles *et al.* 2007). Finally, there is a tendency to engage with issues only when they are problematized rather than proactively seeking to improve conditions (Shore *et al.* 2009). Taken together, these trends create a false comfort that gender inequity is no longer a pressing issue, which forecloses future innovative forays into gender research because fewer questions are considered worthwhile to pursue in mainstream academic outlets (Broadbridge and Simpson 2011; Joshi *et al.* 2015). That said, research into complex and nuanced phenomena does remain robust in diversity journals such as *Gender, Work & Organizations* and *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion*.

In answer to Joshi *et al.*'s (2015) and Rao and Donaldson's (2015) call, our starting point in this review represents a shift in focus away from the most common theoretical paradigms, turning the spotlight on an innovative perspective that may reinvigorate mainstream attention to organizational gender equity. This perspective is associated with positive organizational scholarship (POS) (Cameron and Spreitzer 2012), positive organizational behaviour (POB) (Luthans and Avolio 2009), and positive organizational psychology (POP)

(Donaldson and Ko 2010), broadly termed as the positive work and organizations (PWO) literature (Warren *et al.* 2017). In the broadest terms, the goal of the PWO perspective is to focus attention on mechanisms and processes that can help employees and organizations flourish.² The overarching goal of this review is to examine whether a PWO perspective can enrich the literature in gender diversity and inclusion (D&I).

Several reasons point to why this might be a fruitful avenue for exploration. Vigorously tapping into a PWO approach might shed light not only on how women can be treated fairly, but also how organizations can help them to flourish Rao and Donaldson (2015). Initial case-study research on constructs such as positive psychological capital reveals their immense potential to empower marginalized group members to transform oppressive institutions (Cascio and Luthans 2014). Constructs such as prosociality and gratitude are embedded in the context of interpersonal relationships (Warren *et al.* 2018) and may highlight positive relational possibilities of cross- and same-gender interactions (acknowledging that relationships serve as sites for inclusion as much as discrimination). Such a focus shifts away from a position that prioritizes gender equity because it is an urgent problem demanding rapid redress (side-stepping arguments of whether it is still 'urgent' enough or has already been 'solved'), and instead treats gender equity as a vibrant area deserving of continuous development. A focus on flourishing also addresses the pressing theoretical and practical challenges in the (in)equity literature and moves the conversation forward in new meaningful ways.

We synthesized research published in prominent management and psychology outlets that aligned (implicitly or explicitly) with a PWO orientation to identify contributions that demonstrate how gender equity can be improved *and* how organizations can flourish. These are organized along the main purposes driving D&I efforts, such as increasing performance and enhancing social integration. As the associated literature is still nascent and fragmented, this review offers an integrative theoretical framework that may serve as a foundation for reinvigorating gender research in management.

²One is said to be flourishing if one experiences positive emotions, high psychological well-being, and high social well-being most of the time (Keyes 2002). Organizations can serve as sites wherein individuals and groups flourish (Fredrickson and Dutton 2008).

Scope of the review

PWO: Ontological, epistemological and empirical commitments, and definitions

In this review we highlight scholarship aligned with the PWO lens, regardless of whether those works are explicitly identified as such. We draw broadly from scholarship that aligns with the positive psychology movement, including work developed under the POS, POP, and POB perspectives (see Warren *et al.* 2017). A brief word is in order concerning the ontological, epistemological, and empirical commitments of the PWO lens by which its position within the mainstream literature and within the diversity and inclusion scholarship will be clarified. The positive psychological lens developed against the backdrop of clinical psychology's endeavor to discover effective treatments for people with psychological disorders, and social and organizational psychology's focus on typical individuals' tendencies to display undesirable behaviors such as prejudice and burnout. As such, much of the literature takes a universalist and objectivist stance and the empirical commitments are geared to understanding the normative experiences of the average employee, manager, and organization, with a view to discovering how to reduce adverse behaviors such as burnout and increase desirable outcomes such as performance. Although the positive lens that characterizes some PWO perspectives grew from psychological science and its commitment to empiricism, over the last two decades the positive lens has been adopted by scholars in numerous disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology) who adhere to diverse ontological perspectives such as relativism and epistemological perspectives such as social constructivism and postmodernism (see Donaldson *et al.* 2015; Pedrotti and Edwards 2017). Furthermore, the empirical commitment of PWO perspectives is to understand phenomena associated with the desirable extreme of the spectrum, and to thereby discover the kinds of individual strengths, exemplary relationships, and healthy dynamics that contribute to organizational flourishing. Thus, a key distinction between traditional and positive approaches is the emphasis on strengths, exemplarity, thriving, and flourishing, using a variety of ontological and epistemological perspectives. In this review, we witness similar inroads into management and D&I scholarship, wherein the positive lens has been appropriated into the ontological, epistemological, and empirical commitments of management and D&I.

Past reviews reveal that the application of the positive lens in organizational and management research via POS, POB, and POP has enriched the field (Cameron and Spreitzer 2012; Donaldson and Ko 2010; Warren *et al.* 2017). There is therefore a similar potential for the positive lens to augment the D&I scholarship. For instance, through her PEaCE (Person-Environment-and-Culture-Emergence) metatheoretical transactional framework, Harrell (2018) contends that applying a positive lens may offer effective pathways through which socio-culturally and socio-politically diverse groups can simultaneously honor and transcend differences and thereby 'be human together' (p. 248), and that the study of 'contextualized positive intergroup relations' (pp. 267–269) may offer critical insights about collective well-being and social justice.

More specifically, POS focuses on life-giving dynamics of organizations such as positive work relationships and employee thriving (Cameron *et al.* 2003). Applying this focus to D&I, Davidson *et al.* (2016) propose that a POS lens helps scholars identify new questions, discover untapped organizational resources, and expand the repertoire of available strategies, for example, by reframing minority identities as resources (Roberts and Cha 2016) and by cultivating high-quality work relationships among employees from diverse backgrounds (Simola 2016).

POB examines positive human resource (HR) strengths and psychological capacities such as hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy at individual and team levels (Luthans 2002). POB also focuses on positive and authentic forms of leadership that foster employee well-being and which may be leveraged to skillfully serve women and disenfranchised groups (Warren *et al.* 2017).

Finally, POP involves the scientific study of positive subjective experience (e.g. belonging) and positive individual traits (e.g. compassion) in the interest of improving effectiveness and quality of life in organizations (Donaldson and Ko 2010). These processes can be harnessed to increase well-being and feelings of inclusion among marginalized groups (Rao and Donaldson 2015; Shore *et al.* 2011). These definitions collectively represent a broad framing of PWO research orientations that we used to focus our examination of research on gender in the workplace.

Screening and coding

Since gender scholarship is an interdisciplinary area, we drew from organizational behavior, organizational

psychology, and management publications. We examined 16 years of literature published from 2001 to 2016. Similar to past reviews (e.g. Finnegan et al. 2016; Nielsen 2010; Pindado and Requejo 2015; Ravasi and Canato 2013), our goal was to review scholarship published in select influential high-quality journals. Based on their precedent, we focused this review on 21 well-regarded management and applied psychology journals. We began by selecting for review some of the most influential mainstream journals that publish research on organizational behavior, organizational psychology, and management, according to the *Financial Times* (FT) Research Rank (2016).³ These were: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Human Relations*, *Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Science*, and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. We added *Academy of Management Perspectives* since that journal has previously made the FT list. Finally, we included select well-regarded organizational behavior, organizational psychology, applied psychology, and positive psychology journals: *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *Academy of Management Annals*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Industrial–Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Positive Psychology*, and *Journal of Happiness Studies*. Although this list is far from exhaustive, it represents a robust sample of the premier journals in the areas of interest.

Our literature review began with two authors (the second and third) manually searching through each journal's archive using the search terms 'gender' or 'sex' in the title or abstract, producing a corpus of 859 articles (see Figure 1). Our initial search attempts revealed that articles which studied gender issues commonly used the terms 'gender' or 'sex.' 'Women,' 'men,' 'male,' and 'female' were routinely used to describe sample participants in empirical articles and therefore, did not assist in identifying articles relevant to gender issues and so were dropped as search terms. For journals outside of organizational psychology or management (e.g. *Journal of Personality and Social*

Psychology), we used additional search terms 'work' and 'organization.' Titles and abstracts of these articles were screened for relevance to gender issues. Next, each article was screened for alignment with the constructions of PWO as discussed earlier. This produced a smaller set of 105 articles that included several articles of questionable fit. This set was thoroughly discussed by three authors (first, second, and third) until full consensus was achieved on its PWO contributions to gender or women's issues. For instance, one article (Brands et al. 2015) examines gendered attributions of charisma to leaders. On the surface, this article might seem aligned with a PWO lens, and indeed 'positive leadership' (a POB construct) has roots in psychological research on charismatic forms of leadership behaviors (Bass 1985; Yammarino et al. 2008). However, Brands et al. (2015) focus not on charisma as a positive human resource strength that can be authentically developed or which may contribute to employee flourishing, but rather on how leaders are perceived (favorably or unfavorably) based on their gender. Thus, after much discussion, the team came to a consensus that this article did not contribute sufficiently to PWO scholarship to warrant inclusion.

The final sample of 56 articles was then qualitatively analyzed using Atlas.ti 8 software and coded using an *a priori* coding scheme. For example, each article was coded for the constructs of interest, driver of D&I (e.g. performance), target audience (e.g. women), and positive qualities (e.g. virtues). A thematic analysis was then performed. Network analysis (via Atlas.ti 8) was used to aggregate the first-level codes into second-level categories and identify underlying dimensions. The thematic analysis revealed emergent contributions around approaches aligned with a PWO scholarship of gender D&I, target audience held responsible for change, and interventions for improving conditions. We (first, second, and third authors) transitioned back and forth between emergent themes and theory, and discussed discrepancies, assumptions, and nuances. This analysis allows us to discuss how tapping into PWO literatures might open new avenues for future research.

Gender D&I from a PWO perspective

Our review found four main drivers that motivate the gender research we reviewed. We discuss each of these in turn: performance, social integration, well-being, and moral matters.

³The *Financial Times* Research Rank is sourced from 200 business schools that take part in the FT Global MBA, Executive MBA, or Online MBA rankings.

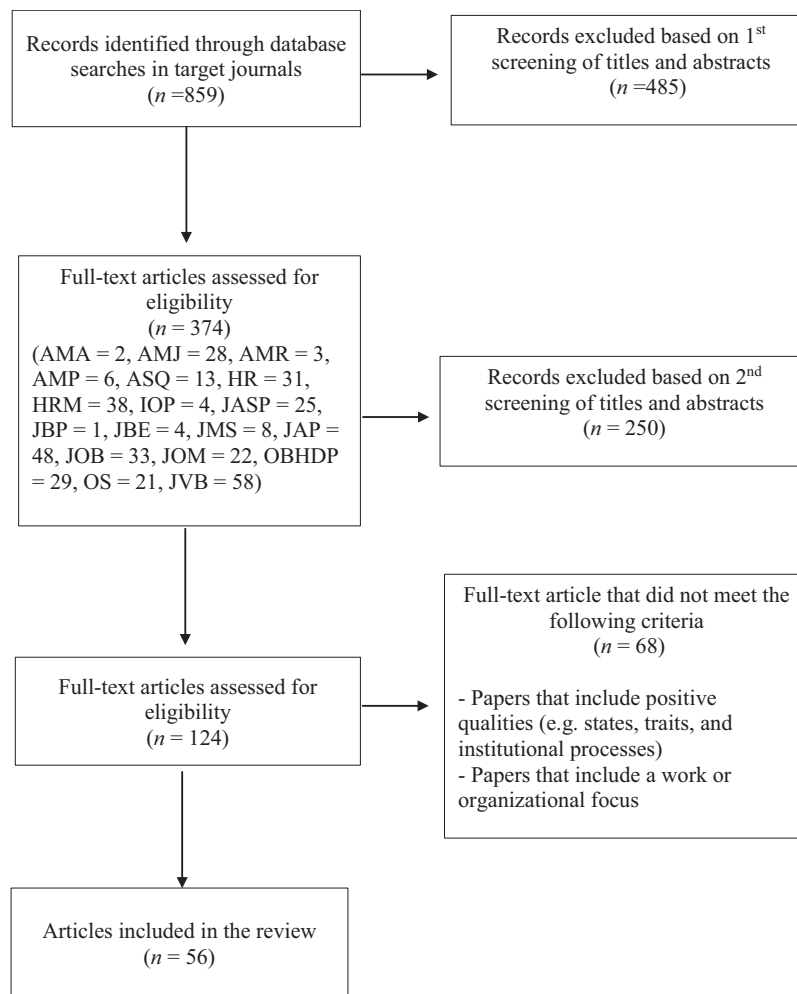


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the systematic literature search, including databases and full articles searched, and reasons for exclusion. The journals listed are: AMA = *Academy of Management Annals*; AMJ = *Academy of Management Journal*; AMR = *Academy of Management Review*; AMP = *Academy of Management Perspectives*; ASQ = *Administrative Science Quarterly*; HR = *Human Relations*; HRM = *Human Resource Management Journal*; IOP = *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*; JASP = *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*; JBP = *Journal of Business and Psychology*; JBE = *Journal of Business Ethics*; JMS = *Journal of Management Studies*; JAP = *Journal of Applied Psychology*; JOB = *Journal of Organizational Behavior*; JOM = *Journal of Management*; OBHDP = *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*; OS = *Organization Science*; JVB = *Journal of Vocational Behavior*

Performance

The most pervasive impetus for diversity is its potential to influence financial outcomes (Opstrup and Villadsen 2015). In theory, it is expected that having a diverse workforce and engaging diverse employee perspectives will result in fresh ideas, learning, and innovations, and ultimately provide a strategic advantage (Richard 2000; Thomas and Ely 1996). However, past evidence shows that the link between diversity and financial outcomes is extremely sensitive to various moderators. Some moderators (e.g. growth-oriented strategies, transformational

leadership) strengthen the link between diversity and financial outcomes, whereas others (e.g. environmental instability) produce poor outcomes (Guillaume *et al.* 2017). We critically examine contributions that employ a PWO perspective in this context.

Business case in egalitarian cultures. One of the key foci of D&I efforts is increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions (Flood 2017). To make the ‘business case’ for advancing this agenda, a common course of action is to examine whether leadership by women leads to financial growth. This is

inherently problematic because the success of women – and organizations led by women – is contingent not only on their merit, but also on how they are received by various stakeholders, more generally captured as the organization's and industry's egalitarianism. In organizations and industries high in egalitarianism, there seems to be a strong business case for investing in advancing women's leadership. A meta-analysis of 78 studies by Hoobler *et al.* (2018) revealed that in cultures which promoted progressive attitudes toward gender parity, leadership by women was more likely to positively influence financial performance (e.g. sales performance). Reflecting a similar trend, a meta-analysis of 140 studies demonstrated that greater representation of women on boards is positively linked to market performance in socio-cultural environments that have greater gender parity, but negatively linked to market performance in low-egalitarian environments (Post and Byron 2015). It is likely that in high-egalitarian environments (as opposed to low-egalitarian environments), investors are more optimistic about the future earning potential of firms led by women, which results in higher market performance. Further, Cook and Glass (2011) found that conformity to gender norms predicted success, such that the announcement of a new female senior executive into leadership positions in *Fortune* 1000 companies was met with optimism in terms of share price reactions only for firms in female-dominated industries, and not for male-dominated industries. In contrast, new male leaders were received favorably in both male and female-dominated industries. Therefore, although the business case for women's leadership (operationalized as financial performance) may be a useful criterion in an egalitarian environment or female-dominated industry, it provides an incomplete account of the value that women bring to organizations in low-egalitarian or male-dominated environments.

Given this context, the two main questions that arise are how can the success of women's leadership be measured fairly, and how can deleterious socio-cultural environment factors be mitigated? Two pathways emerge from our analysis that hold promise in addressing these questions. One entails expanding the myopic focus on financial performance as the end-goal to consider additional indicators (e.g. ethical performance) that can predict financial sustainability in the long term. Another pathway involves, to the extent possible, countering the effects of low-egalitarian external socio-cultural factors that undermine women's success by proactively cultivating an internal

organizational culture that sets women up for success. These approaches open space for additional ways to measure and enhance the value that women leaders bring to organizations.

Ethical performance. The presence of women in leadership positions is consistently linked to greater ethical behavior. Results from a study of 922 large European firms found that although higher female representation on corporate boards may not directly affect firm value, higher female representation is positively associated with ethical behaviors and corporate social responsibility, which can indirectly affect firm value and financial sustainability over time (Isidro and Sobral 2015). In another study of 1484 companies, the presence of women on boards was directly related to lower frequency and severity of fraud, particularly in male-dominated industries (Cumming *et al.* 2015). Similarly, a meta-analysis of 140 studies demonstrates that female board representation is positively related to greater focus on activities that are central to boards' responsibilities: monitoring and strategy involvement (Post and Byron 2015). Thus, considerable empirical evidence (albeit correlational) shows that gender diversity on corporate boards is a strength when ethical behaviors and corporate social responsibility are deemed relevant to the organization's success.

Gender diversity supports future women's leadership. Findings suggest that gender diversity may buffer negative effects during a change in leadership. In a study of 3320 CEO successions, Zhang and Qu (2016) found that typically when a CEO is succeeded by an individual of a different gender (i.e. a male CEO is succeeded by a female CEO or vice versa), firm performance declines and there is a greater likelihood of the successor's early departure. This is exacerbated for incumbent women leaders. However, positive attitudes toward female leaders – as indicated by the presence of women board members – buffer the negative link between male to female CEO change and firm performance. Thus, gender diversity on boards may stabilize firms during transitions and set up future women leaders for success.

Gender diversity as an asset for transforming cultures. The presence of women can be a vital resource in transforming problematic cultures in male-dominated professions. For instance, considerable evidence demonstrates that women police officers are less likely to use extreme levels of force, and therefore increasing the presence of female police officers may

help move the needle on police brutality in the United States (Bergman *et al.* 2016). Similarly, the presence of women triggers men to interact with more interpersonal sensitivity toward women as well as other men (Williams and Polman 2015). Thus, the presence of women, particularly in historically male-dominated environments, can shift social norms around interpersonal interactions at work.

Respectful relational norms as adaptive processes. Several studies show that in mixed gender groups, uncertainty leads to poor creativity: men may fear offending women and women may fear their ideas being devalued by men (Amabile *et al.* 2005; Goncalo and Staw 2006). Interestingly, a political correctness (PC) norm (e.g. avoiding sexist language) in groups plays an adaptive role in such gender-diverse contexts by encouraging respectful interactions, and this can increase creativity and idea exchange (Goncalo *et al.* 2010, 2015). Goncalo *et al.* (2015) found that the PC norm in gender-diverse groups reduces uncertainty, thereby helping team members express novel ideas and perform well. However, it is useful to note that in same-gender groups, the PC norm may feel irrelevant and confusing, leading such groups to underperform. Regardless, it seems useful to examine various forms of respectful engagement (e.g. Carmeli *et al.* 2015) as processes that foster high performance and creativity in gender-diverse groups.

Diversity flourishes when HR invests. Past research has found mixed results on whether gender diversity predicts workforce productivity. Roh and Kim (2016) found that human resource management's (HRM's) investments in its people play an important moderating role in this equation. They examined productivity when HRM made low versus high investments (via pay, benefits, training, and communication) in low versus high gender-diverse environments. They found that productivity was highest when HRM invests in employees in high gender-diverse environments. However, productivity was lowest when HRM investments were low in environments where gender diversity was high. Thus, when HRM symbolically and practically places value on its people, it amplifies the positive link between gender diversity and employee productivity.

Critical synthesis. The need to make a 'business case' for women's leadership is inherently flawed – there is no scrutiny of the link between men's leadership and financial performance to justify men (as a

group) as leaders (Hiller *et al.* 2011; Hoobler *et al.* 2018). Regardless, it is important that the criteria by which women's effectiveness as leaders are measured are useful and offer a fair picture of women's contributions. Currently, women's success is measured by the very androcentric systems that undermine their control. Expanding these boundaries of what constitutes the 'business case' allows consideration of factors that are less undermined by cultural biases which marginalize women in the first place. In this context, use of a PWO lens (as opposed to the traditional approach) involves inquiring about and identifying strengths that are associated with women's leadership and including them as critical parameters for organizational success. Inclusion of ethical performance is one example of expanding what constitutes a relevant parameter. Similarly, application of a POS perspective invites questions such as what processes, routines, and cultural factors help women perform to the best of their ability and set them up for success. This review suggests that cultivating interpersonal cultures and norms that create psychological safety for women offers a cultural foundation that helps women succeed. HR processes which symbolically and practically communicate that the organization cares for its employees may be important in any context, but seem to be particularly valuable for enhancing women's productivity. Collectively, these insights urge that as opposed to the traditional approach of asking how much women contribute, we use the positive lens to ask questions such as: *How can women's contributions be made visible and valued? How can the organizational culture be shaped so that women are equipped and freed to excel?* Asking different questions from such a positive lens might help broaden the scope of what counts as the accomplishments of a good leader and open our eyes to outcomes that are not otherwise visible within an androcentric structure. As such research is still sparse, there is a need for more systematic investigations on gender-specific as well as general practices that can enable women, and in turn organizations, to succeed.

Social integration

Another prominent goal of workplace diversity scholarship is social integration, broadly aimed at increasing cohesion and reducing conflict in gender-diverse environments. A critical confluence of the concern for performance and social integration is captured in the pursuit of inclusion. Shore *et al.* (2011, p. 1265) define inclusion as the experience of under-represented

group members when they feel that they are ‘esteemed member[s] of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies [their] needs for belongingness and uniqueness.’ Organizations that emphasize inclusion support social integration so that all employees are able to contribute to the organization’s performance as fully as possible (Avery *et al.* 2008; Miller *et al.* 1998). Although inclusion is acknowledged as a fundamental concern for D&I scholarship and practice, the research on inclusion is still relatively scant (Shore *et al.* 2011). We critically examine contributions focused on strengthening interpersonal relationships, enhancing cohesiveness, and fostering inclusion in the context of diversity.

Inclusive and positive diversity climates. Just as homogenous groups are associated with homophily (e.g. similarity-attraction theory; Newcomb 1961, 1968), high gender diversity in the workplace can accompany disharmony and conflict (see Mannix and Neale 2005). Climate for inclusion⁴ – a climate that proactively eliminates relational sources of bias so that gender identity is unrelated to access to resources – can reduce the potential for conflict (Nishii 2013). Climate for inclusion has been found to moderate the links between gender diversity and relationship conflict and task conflict, such that inclusive climates buffer the deleterious effects of gender diversity on relationship conflict and task conflict. Further, the negative link between relationship conflict and unit-level satisfaction is moderated by climate for inclusion (i.e. in units with high climate for inclusion, relationship conflict is not related to unit-level satisfaction). In addition to mitigating conflict, an inclusive climate predicts several positive outcomes. A meta-analysis involving 500 000 workers across 30 studies revealed that in organizations with favorable climates for inclusion (i.e. high perceptions of organizational diversity), employees had higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work engagement, and intentions to stay in the organization than in companies with unfavorable climates for inclusion (Mor Barak *et al.* 2016).

In addition to cultivating a sense of inclusion, a positive diversity climate has noteworthy consequences

for HR. Gonzalez and Denisi (2009) found that employees in supportive diversity climates with high gender diversity had lower intentions to quit than those working in environments with adverse diversity climates. Further, Virick and Greer (2012) found that when a manager (regardless of their gender) perceived the diversity climate to be supportive of women, the successor was more likely to be female. Thus, a positive diversity climate has direct implications for the retention and advancement of women.

What might be a good starting place in creating inclusive and positive diversity climates? A study aimed at improving women’s representation in science and engineering among tenure-track faculty brings to light an important but understudied consideration. Bilimoria *et al.* (2008) point out that although organizational-level policies and structures influence and shape the macro-climate of the institution, there is a need to attend to cultivating inclusive and energizing micro-climates within units/department in the institution. Micro-climates are potent spaces that affect employees within the unit most intimately, and specific social psychological interventions can help micro-climates become more inclusive. How can units cultivate inclusive climates? Below are some potential pathways.

Inclusive leaders. One pathway to developing leaders who exhibit inclusive behaviors draws from research on authentic leadership.⁵ Boekhorst (2015) proposes that in order to institutionalize inclusion, authentic leaders – through their strong sense of self-awareness – should model inclusive behaviors (e.g. communicating to newcomers how engendering a sense of belonging and respect for uniqueness in the organization has led to internal integration and external adaptation), and thereby convey their importance to their followers. Further, reward systems (e.g. praise, public recognition, awards) should be aligned with inclusive behaviors in order to communicate what behaviors are valued and to reinforce vicarious learning of inclusivity.

In addition, the quality of the leader–follower relationship can be critical. Nishii and Mayer (2009)

⁴Climate for inclusion is defined by Boekhorst (2015, p. 242) as ‘the shared perception of the work environment including the practices, policies, and procedures that guide a shared understanding that inclusive behaviors, which foster belongingness and uniqueness, are expected, supported, and rewarded.’

⁵Authentic leaders as defined by Avolio *et al.* (2004, p. 4) are ‘those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character.’

found that under conditions of high diversity, high-quality relationships with followers resulted in the lowest turnover. However, turnover was the highest when leaders developed high-quality relationships with some, but not all, of their followers, because of perceptions of unfair treatment to those who are not among the select few. This highlights the importance of leaders implementing inclusive forms of leadership and developing positive teams, not just with some but *all* of their followers.

Inclusive teams and co-workers. Team orientation, that is, behaviors that reflect a desire to work with others and place value on others' contributions, may be useful in fostering inclusion. Through a longitudinal study of 45 teams, Mohammed and Angell (2004) examined the moderating role of team orientation on mixed-gender groups and relationship conflict. They found that in gender-diverse teams, high (versus low) team orientation was linked to lower relationship conflict. Thus, team orientation – represented by openness and respect for all – can serve as a buffer to relationship conflict in gender-diverse contexts.

Cultivating male champions and allies. Although generalized respectful interrelating is beneficial, it could be even more productive if men took a step further to consciously behave inclusively toward women co-workers as a way to correct gender inequity. Bilimoria *et al.* (2008) argue that in order to foster inclusion, there is a pressing need to engage men as partners and allies for culture change efforts at all levels of the institution. As Kelan's (2018) review finds, traditional research primarily focuses on how men perpetuate gender differences, however, the specific practices that men can undertake to undo gender remain under-researched. A PWO perspective that asks how men can be an active part of the solution places the spotlight on practices such as men proactively developing meaningful connections with women (as opposed to excluding women through 'old boy networks'; p. 551), displaying humility and emotional intelligence in their interactions (as opposed to dominating and 'peacocking'; p. 550), and sharing space with women rather than hoarding it (Kelan 2018). Another strategy involves championing of diversity through extra-role behaviors aimed at ensuring the success of existing diversity initiatives. Such championing, however, seems to be a complex social process. Cunningham and Sartore (2010) found that majority group (e.g. male) co-workers' support for each other's championing behaviors was an important

predictor of championing. Thus, it is helpful for men to not only champion for diversity and women, but these effects may be amplified when men also support other men's championing behaviors. As a nascent area, there is much scope for further research on effective approaches to championing (e.g. empowering versus 'playing savior'), predictors of male championing of diversity initiatives and women's leadership, effect of championing on women's success, effect of championing on champions themselves as well as bystanders, and effect on organizational outcomes.

Fostering positive emotions. Humor can enhance the interpersonal quality of the workplace environment (Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001), and its benefits may be accrued if managed with sensitivity. Although there is much research on how aggressive and sexist humor is detrimental (Smeltzer and Leap 1988), new research has begun to identify positive ways in which humor can be used in organizations. Romero and Cruthirds (2006) proposed that in deviating from gender norms in humor styles, if men use affiliative humor when addressing women and women use self-enhancing humor when addressing men, humor may render positive organizational outcomes. Regardless, they recommend avoiding gender-based humor. Future research should examine whether switching gender norms in humor styles improves organizational outcomes, and whether such reversal is ultimately well received by peers. More generally, it would be useful to examine how affiliation-enhancing positive emotions might be actively cultivated as a means of facilitating feelings of inclusion.

Critical synthesis. Although diversity has received considerable attention in traditional management and HR scholarship, dedicated research on inclusion is still nascent. Mainstream framing of inclusion has focused on the organization's (and its leaders') efforts to ensure that women 'are allowed to participate' (Miller 1998, p. 151) and any obstacles to participation are removed (Roberson 2006). Although eliminating prominent barriers to participation is a necessary first step, this may not be sufficient for women to *feel* included. In contrast, a construction of inclusion aligned with a PWO perspective focuses on inclusive behaviors as involving high-quality interpersonal connections that actively foster belongingness and appreciation across genders, and inclusive climates as those in which such inclusive behaviors are expected, supported, and rewarded (e.g. Boekhorst 2015). This definition is closely compatible with POS's focus

on positive work relationships and support of life-affirming organizational cultures. Recent research demonstrates that such inclusive climates decrease relationship conflict and attrition in diverse organizations (see Mor Barak *et al.* 2016). Moreover, positive diversity climates boost women's advancement, unit-level satisfaction, and employee engagement. Initial evidence also suggests that organizations, leaders, and co-workers from dominant (men) as well as under-represented (women) groups all have a positive role to play – indeed a responsibility – in fostering inclusive climates. Acknowledging the roles of individuals (e.g. men as allies) holds promise for both building powerfully inclusive micro-climates in the teams/units where those individuals work, as well as contributing in a bottom-up fashion to inclusive organization-wide macro-climates. Future research should empirically test whether affiliation-enhancing positive emotions boost women's sense of belonging and overall inclusiveness.

Well-being and quality of life

A key consequence of discrimination is stress and lower well-being for women. Beyond direct financial implications of D&I for the organization (i.e. the business case) and social cohesion as a means to productivity, scholars are increasingly turning their attention to well-being and quality of work life for women. Although these outcomes may serve instrumental functions (e.g. impact productivity), we argue that these are intrinsically valuable end-goals toward which organizations should aspire. Therefore, we review studies that have made important contributions to women's well-being and improved quality of life.

Work–life balance. In order to foster overall employee well-being, many organizations invest in work–family programs such as flexible work hours, childcare assistance (e.g. day care), and parental leave. However, researchers often find that the mere presence of work–family programs does not ensure that they are utilized, even among those who might need them the most. One deterrent, particularly for women, seems to be the fear that use of work–family programs signals prioritization of family over work, which may trigger negative gender stereotypes about women as being unable to perform leadership responsibilities (e.g. think-manager-think-male phenomenon; Schein *et al.* 1996), thereby impeding their chances of promotion (Powell 1997). What might encourage employees to use work–family programs?

Egalitarian cultures. Egalitarian and supportive cultures have been found to play an important role in the uptake of work–family programs (McDonald *et al.* 2005; Thompson *et al.* 1999), and more importantly, strengthen their link to career growth and well-being. In a large cross-cultural study of 9627 managers from 33 countries, Lyness and Judiesch (2008) found that work–life balance was positively associated with women's career advancement in high-egalitarian, but not in low-egalitarian cultures. In another study of 1416 employees across seven cultures, Haar *et al.* (2014) found that in high gender-egalitarian cultures (as opposed to cultures with low gender egalitarianism), perceptions of work–life balance were positively related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction, and negatively related to anxiety and depression. Taken together, the emerging portrait is that in gender-egalitarian cultures, work–life balance is valued rather than penalized, and therefore associated with positive well-being and career growth outcomes.

In addition to gender-egalitarian cultures and work–family programs, it is also important that work itself is experienced as meaningful and fulfilling. As Siu *et al.* (2010) found, even in the presence of family-friendly policies and job autonomy in organizations, if women do not find their work to be engaging and fulfilling, it is unlikely to lead to work–family enrichment. In this regard, certain factors can help enhance meaning and engagement.

Positive gender identity. Werhane (2007) notes that positive gender identity can free women from the pressure to conform to prescriptive models of leadership and opens avenues to lead with authenticity. When a woman positively evaluates herself as a woman, it is likely to influence her leadership. In a study of women leaders, Karelaia and Guillén (2014) found that simultaneously holding a positive gender identity *and* leader identity was associated with lower perceived conflict between being a woman and being a leader. Further, women leaders who had a positive gender identity (as opposed to those who did not) derived joy from leading and perceived leadership as an attractive goal rather than as a duty. Thus, women leaders with positive gender identities experienced lower stress and higher well-being. Further, positive affect, values, attitudes, and behaviors often transfer from work to home domains and vice versa (Hanson *et al.* 2006; Powell and Greenhaus 2010) and as such, the benefits of a positive gender identity may

spill over and may become amplified and reinforced in other domains of a woman's life.

Optimism. Optimism, defined as a general expectancy of positive outcomes (Scheier *et al.* 1994), can play a protective role for women. Sechrist (2010) found that women who were optimistic were more likely to stand up against discrimination. Most importantly, the optimism did not stem from a naïveté, that is, optimism was not related to lenient attributions of the discrimination or to lower perceptions of discrimination. Instead, optimistic women were more likely to anticipate successful outcomes from confrontation and were, therefore, more likely to stand up for themselves, gain knowledge, and educate the perpetrator. Further research should study how this kind of justice-oriented optimism develops.

Mentoring. Mentoring relationships are a source of individual flourishing for both the mentor and the protégé (Weinberg and Lankau 2011), and gender dissimilarity in mentoring relationships plays a role in relationship satisfaction. Kao *et al.* (2014) reported that gender dissimilarity influenced the relationship between career mentoring and resilience. When protégés received high levels of career mentoring in cross-gender relationships, resilience levels of protégés were higher than for protégés in same-gender mentoring relationships. For male mentors of female protégés, this is another benefit of male allyship. However, cross-gender mentoring relationships are likely to have a rough start, although the relationship typically improves over time (Weinberg and Lankau 2011). This fits with observations that protégés in gender-dissimilar dyads tend to receive less mentoring in short-term relationships, but more mentoring in long-term relationships (Turban *et al.* 2002). Cross-gender relationships might produce an exchange of perspectives over time, resulting in more beneficial outcomes later (e.g. information and perspective sharing).

Social support. Another important resource for well-being is social support. Miner *et al.* (2012) found that emotional support (i.e. peers care and listen sympathetically) and organizational support (i.e. organization values contributions and cares for employee well-being) is positively related to women's psychological well-being. Although gender-based incivility is associated with lower well-being, this link is buffered by emotional and organizational support. Therefore, although organizations are obligated to

eliminate incivility, social support can minimize its negative impact on women in imperfect work settings.

Critical synthesis. Attention to women's well-being and quality of (work) life, by definition, has the strongest alignment with positive psychology, which is also known as the science of well-being (Donaldson *et al.* 2015). In contrast with traditional research that focuses on women's stress and poor physical and mental health (as key outcomes of discrimination; Dhanani *et al.* 2018), a PWO approach inquires how women can experience well-being. Well-being seems to manifest at the confluence of supportive cultures, individual attitudes, and supportive mentors and peers. Organizations can contribute to improved well-being by providing work–family programs and, more importantly, cultivating egalitarian cultures that encourage utilization of those programs. A gap in the current research and an area for future research is an examination of how supportive and egalitarian cultures may be cultivated and nurtured at the micro-unit and organizational levels. Further, mentors and peers have an important role to play in providing support. In addition, women themselves can be powerful sources of their well-being by cultivating a positive gender identity and standing up against discrimination. Further research is needed to understand the contextual factors that bolster (or undermine) women's positive gender identity and optimism, and the ways in which mentors and peers can best support women.

Social justice, morality, and virtue

One of the most pervasive drivers of D&I research stems from the pursuit of social and organizational justice. This has been influential in shaping organization-wide diversity policies and practices, such as affirmative action plans that emphasize fair representation of women at all levels of an organization's hierarchy. What individual characteristics and mechanisms might increase employee support for inclusive policies? Recent research aligned with the positive psychological perspective examines psychological characteristics related to increasing psychological ownership of D&I policies and cultivating inclusive mindsets.

Further, emerging contributions approach inclusion as an interpersonal endeavor that can foster a culture of authentic, meaningful, and warm connections between members of dominant and under-represented groups. Gotsis and Kortezi (2013) hold that inclusion

should be valued as an end in itself – that is, as a civic virtue centered on human dignity, deep respect, value for differences, affirmation of the diverse other, and an ethic of care. These contributions, which approach social justice through fostering high-quality intergroup connections grounded in civic virtue, are well aligned with the POS perspective. We review such contributions from the social justice and moral domains at the organizational, interpersonal, and individual levels.

Psychological ownership. The social justice perspective to D&I has led to the proliferation of policies that promote equal opportunity and treatment in the organization. However, the presence of policies alone is insufficient for lasting positive impact. These frequently require employee support in order to be successful. Non-beneficiary co-workers (i.e. men) tend to be more supportive when they take psychological ownership of employment equity policies. Hideg *et al.* (2011) found that men are more likely to support an employment equity policy when they actively participate in developing the policy. Participation is associated with perceptions of control and the product is viewed as an extension of oneself (Pierce *et al.* 2003). Further, it is helpful when hesitant men are encouraged to participate and reassured that they do indeed have a place in the gender-parity conversation (Sherf *et al.* 2017).

Inclusive mindset. With increasing globalization, a variety of approaches have emerged to help managers cultivate a mindset that is conducive to bridging differences (Andresen and Bergdolt 2017; Levy *et al.* 2007). Here, insights from international business research converge with those from gender research. Research on ‘global mindset’ suggests that passion for diversity (i.e. curiosity about others and other ways of doing things), intercultural empathy (i.e. communicating and connecting with others across differences), and diplomacy (i.e. listening and integrating diverse perspectives) are particularly useful in bridging differences (Javidan *et al.* 2016). These concepts align with similar other-oriented constructs such as *al-phililia* (i.e. positive attitudes toward different others; Pittinsky and Montoya 2009), perspective-taking, and cultural humility (i.e. defined as a virtue that involves actively learning about others’ cultural experiences from them; Hook *et al.* 2016). Although women managers tend to show higher levels of passion for diversity, intercultural empathy, and diplomacy than men (Javidan *et al.* 2016), these are useful skills that men

might cultivate to bridge differences. Further, Strauss and Connerley (2003) found no gender differences in *adopting* an attitude of appreciation of, and comfort with, similarities and differences (universal-diverse orientation) for women and men high in general openness to experience and agreeableness. This suggests that while women may currently display certain inclusive qualities to a greater extent, willing men might be equally *able* to cultivate these qualities and champion diversity.

Moral action. Some scholars explicitly treat commitment to D&I as a moral action derived from organizations’ and leaders’ values and virtues. Church and Rotolo (2013, p. 247) posit that inclusion involves a form of ‘values-driven humanistic change.’ They suggest that the pursuit of D&I should transcend the business justification and empirical rationale for investment, because regardless of whether or not it is ‘good for business,’ it is ‘simply the right thing to do’ (Church and Rotolo 2013, p. 247). Two anecdotal cases suggest that a commitment to D&I can bring about intrinsic change over time. At Johnson & Johnson, D&I was imposed as a corporate value, and at PepsiCo, D&I was strongly endorsed by the CEO. Although imposed from the top, arguably due to consistent exposure and practice, these values became internalized by employees over time, and ultimately shifted the culture. These cases align with recent theorizing on how habitual practice of virtuous behaviors, even if initially adopted for extrinsic reasons, may become internalized and transformed into authentic behaviors over time (Snow 2018).

Hideg and Ferris (2014) also observe that self-enhancement (i.e. a desire to view oneself as positively as possible) (Chen *et al.* 2013; Pfeffer and Fong 2005) can serve a functional role in promoting D&I. Their study of employees’ reaction to employment equity policies found that men and women are more likely to support policies when they do not perceive them as threats to their self-image. More importantly, men and women react more favorably to employment equity policies when they perceive them to help their positive self-image. Thus, positioning support for diversity as a ‘good deed’ that enhances self-image can be productive. Further, positive interventions that mitigate self-image threat and bolster positive self-image, such as value self-affirmation exercises (e.g. Sherman and Cohen 2002), are useful in eliciting favorable responses to employment equity policies (Hideg and Ferris 2014).

Critical synthesis. The social justice and moral driver of D&I often keeps the investment in D&I scholarship and practice going even when specific practices do not bring about profits, social cohesion, or improvements in the quality of work life in the short term. Traditional social justice efforts often examine how injustice persists and is perpetuated through a lack of collective responsibility in correcting inequities. A PWO approach augments this work by asking how the virtues of justice and responsibility can be cultivated so that individuals and organizations proactively improve conditions. Several psychological and social factors can help set up D&I policies for success, mitigate barriers, and strengthen the link to performance, social cohesion, and well-being. In particular, men can be sources of support rather than resistance. Engaging men in the conversation such that they experience psychological ownership can be powerful. Future research might also explore whether psychological ownership can be fostered directly by the cultivation of an individual's virtue and collective responsibility. Encouraging empathy and openness may help men and women to motivate an inclusive mindset. Moreover, virtuous motivation from the top to create an inclusive culture *for its own sake* seems promising. These lines of research are closely aligned with the PWO perspective and hold the potential for change. Simply, the convergence of (a) value-driven commitment from the top (i.e. positive leadership), (b) building support for D&I policies and practices by encouraging men's and women's empathy (i.e. fostering self-transcendent emotions), and (c) highlighting the virtues behind inclusiveness (i.e. cultivating organizational virtuousness) may lead to authentic inclusion.

Critical synthesis of positive drivers of gender diversity and inclusion

Considerable mainstream gender research seeks to understand the nature, extent, and drivers of inequity, with the hope that such knowledge will enable organizations to eliminate it (Kelan 2018). Although this is unquestionably a critical goal, this emphasis gives short shrift to focused study on how organizations can consciously mobilize their resources to not only undo such practices, but also help women flourish. In a past review, Guillaume *et al.* (2017) observed that much of the traditional D&I research clusters around concerns for performance, social integration, and more recently, employee well-being. Our review reveals some additional gaps and imbal-

ances in the literature. Although considerable attention has been devoted to increasing performance and social cohesion, research on the specific positive organizational mechanisms that may lead to such increases is scant and fragmented. There is a need for future research that systematically examines, for instance, specific positive mechanisms that may promote climates of egalitarianism and inclusion. Positive organizational scholarship has made forays into understanding the cultivation of high-quality workplace connections (Dutton and Heaphy 2003), civility (Porath *et al.* 2015), and psychological safety (Newman *et al.* 2017), and these may play important roles in creating inclusive climates. Similarly, although there is a fair amount of scholarship on stress and ill-health, our review reveals scant attention to the gendered dimensions of physical and psychological well-being outcomes (e.g. happiness, meaning, vitality) in the workplace. The literature on the moral driver for gender D&I at the individual and interpersonal levels also seems to be nascent. Although the social and organizational justice literature speaks to the moral significance of D&I at the organization and policy levels, there is unrealized potential in extending this work to the individual and interpersonal levels.

Complicating 'positive'. During our review, we found articles that serve a cautionary tale in constructing a 'positive perspective.' Simply, it is important not to construe a 'positive perspective' as including positive stereotyping, benevolent sexism, or other nefarious practices that are positive in name only. For example, positive stereotypes are associated with feeling like 'choking under pressure' (Tagler 2012, p. 401), and predict negative interpersonal experiences, particularly in individualistic cultures where people hold strong desires to be viewed as unique (Siy and Cheryan 2013). Similarly, across several studies, Hideg and Ferris (2016) demonstrate that benevolent sexist attitudes are problematic. Although such attitudes may be driven by compassion and are associated with support for employment equity policies, such support is limited to hiring in positions viewed as feminine and not masculine, increasing gender segregation rather than equity (Hideg and Ferris 2016). Although factors such as positive stereotyping and benevolent sexism may carry a veneer of positivity on the surface, they do not support women's flourishing. Thus, we emphasize that *flourishing* of women and gender-diverse groups be used as the ultimate barometer for applying the 'positive' label in the context of gender research.

Socio-cultural constraints on the model. In this paper, we identified nuggets of PWO research that are making inroads into, and may collectively reinvigorate, gender research. The model emerging from this review is built on a foundation of empirical psychological and management research that has studied positive phenomena at the individual and group levels. However, an additional influential set of dynamics is the inherent embeddedness of organizations within socio-cultural contexts that implicitly or explicitly thwart efforts to support women. For instance, despite empirical research showing that gender diversity on boards is associated with higher ethical performance (Isidro and Sobral 2015) and the future success of women leaders (Zhang and Qu 2016), there is often employee and organizational resistance to change, and the most reliable means of increasing gender diversity on the board seems to be by imposing legislation, which itself often bears adverse side-effects for women and organizations (Dobson and Rastad 2018; Labelle *et al.* 2015). Similarly, although some large US organizations have begun to offer paternal leave (e.g. Netflix, Etsy), uptake of leave by men remains low (O'Connor 2016). These kinds of socio-cultural influences seem to undermine the success of organizational policies and processes designed to increase gender equity and may ultimately constrain organizational flourishing. Notably, the dearth of attention to socio-cultural factors within PWO scholarship relating to gender suggests that future research should utilize a cross-cultural approach to examine the potential moderating role of socio-cultural factors (e.g. gender norms) on the effectiveness of positive D&I approaches for organizational flourishing.

Future directions

How can organizations flourish through D&I? Fredrickson and Dutton (2008) discuss individual flourishing as the experience of positive emotions, psychological well-being, and social well-being, and view organizations as potential sites wherein individuals may flourish. However, this framing does not elucidate how organizations themselves might flourish. Therefore, we turn to the Latin root 'florere,' meaning literally to blossom, and figuratively, to prosper. We suggest that this framing of flourishing captures the overarching ideal end-goal of D&I at the organizational level. Synthesizing the extant work associated with positive approaches to the study of gender issues, we propose a model (see Figure 2) of organizational

flourishing through D&I that results from (a) strong financial health and sustainability predicted by superior performance of employees and teams, (b) healthy organizational culture predicted by social integration of diverse employees, (c) employee well-being emerging from concern for the quality of life of all employees, and (d) organizational virtuousness stemming from a demonstrated moral and ethical commitment toward social justice. We propose that when these four dimensions are present, an organization is likely to flourish through D&I (see Figure 2). Stemming from our review of these dimensions, we now offer recommendations for future research.

Most impactful predictors of flourishing through D&I

In this review, we identified gender-oriented factors that amplify or diminish performance, social integration, well-being, and organizational justice in organizations. However, empirical investigations into how each driver contributes to organizational flourishing remain underexplored. Future research should empirically test the various parts of our model, and examine whether indeed there are four distinct drivers that predict organizational flourishing through D&I. Further, studies should examine the role of specific positive factors (identified in the model) on the four drivers outlined. This would uncover the differential role each factor (e.g. respectful relational norms, HR investment) plays on its respective driver (performance), clarifying which factors are the most impactful. Alternatively, a given driver such as performance may function best when all of its constitutive factors work together in an integrated fashion, and similarly, organizations may flourish optimally when the various drivers (performance, social integration, well-being, morality) mutually support one another. Finally, future research may test the interrelationships between the various factors and drivers in the model (see Figure 2).

Men as allies and champions

A critical theme emerging from this review – yet one that receives little attention in D&I conversations – is fostering inclusiveness at the individual and interpersonal level by actively engaging men as champions and allies. Many D&I trainings and interventions focus on reducing conflict and implicit bias. This important work might fruitfully be complemented by empowering men to become inclusive

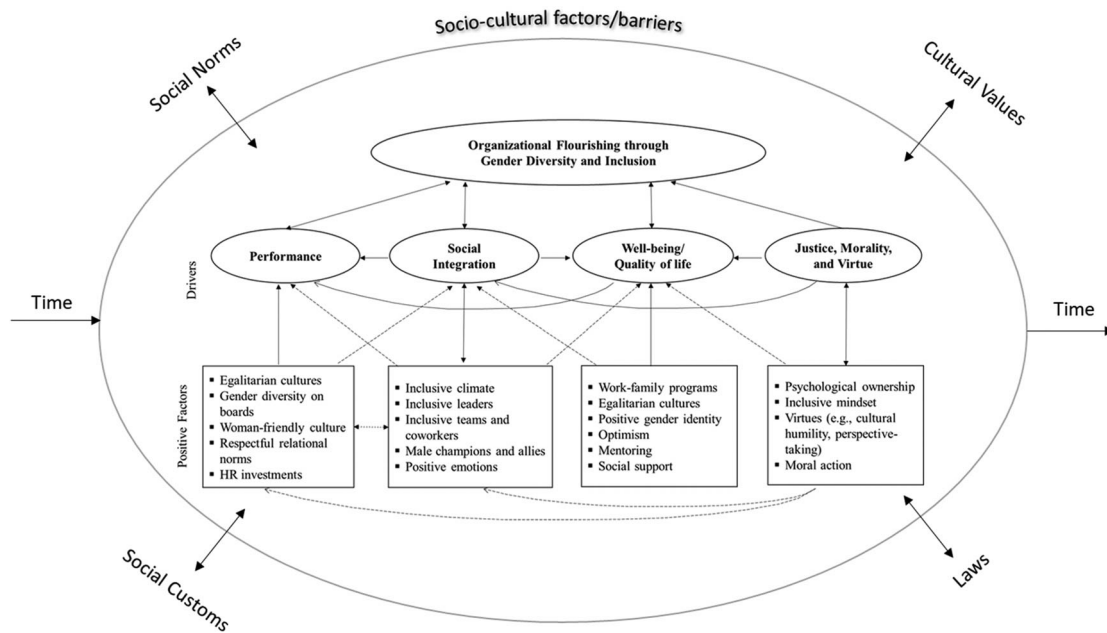


Figure 2. Proposed positive factors, drivers, and socio-cultural factors and their interrelationships underlying organizational flourishing through gender D&I

co-workers and leaders. Similarly, whereas broader efforts on women’s leadership tend to examine how women can become more successful leaders, shatter glass ceilings, and navigate labyrinths, a positively oriented complement to this might involve training men in best practices in supporting women’s leadership. A promising starting point for developing such training programs might be to learn from the behaviors of those men who are already intrinsically motivated and inclusive leaders, and investigate how their inclusivity impacts themselves, other men, women, and the organization.

Examining how women flourish

There is a need for research that examines directly how women flourish in the workplace. Although PWO research is geared to examine how employees, in general, can flourish, given that women often operate in androcentric work systems, they may be at a disadvantage in making full use of positive organizational interventions. For instance, women may feel pressured not to use work–family programs lest they invite negative perceptions that they prioritize family over work. Further, women may need different resources to flourish in a biased system, such as support in the face of sexual harassment and its consequences for psychological and physical well-being (Holland and Cortina 2016). Further, the specific mechanisms that

support women’s flourishing and specific indicators of flourishing might be different for women compared to men and different *across* women. Future research should examine explicit predictors of women’s engagement at work, positive experiences at work, and flourishing in the workplace.

Creating pockets of flourishing

By drawing lessons from organizational change initiatives designed to promote gender-diverse groups in the workplace, we recommend that future research should examine inclusiveness at the unit level. Whereas orchestrating large-scale organizational flourishing might be challenging, unit-level inclusiveness carries the potential to leverage individual and interpersonal virtuousness to create pockets of inclusive climates. We contend that team-level instances of flourishing through D&I serve as sites at which to initiate, develop, and sustain positive relationships. Thus, future work should examine the impact that such small, fragmented, exemplary units have on organizational flourishing, and aspire to scale them up into cultural norms.

Moral virtuousness as a complement to social justice

Our review has revealed that although there are some fragmented conversations of values and virtues in the

context of D&I, this remains a largely underexplored area. D&I initiatives often take the form of diversity policies that address systemic injustices in organizations (Thomas and Ely 1996). Grounded in a deontological approach, diversity policies offer rules and directives to establish equity and parity. However, an impersonal top-down approach that does not engage employees' values might be experienced as inauthentic and lacking in psychological ownership. Further, policies tend to be limited in their ability to harness intrinsically motivated inclusive interpersonal behaviors. We propose that a focus on virtuousness (i.e. a virtue ethics perspective; Hursthouse 1999) creates an inviting space for employees to bring the 'best within them' into the service of inclusiveness. Positive organizational scholarship has much to contribute in this regard. For instance, the scholarship on compassion at work (Kanov *et al.* 2004) and organizational virtuousness (Cameron *et al.* 2004) can open the doors to exploring how men can harness their existing virtues of compassion, empathy, and integrity in the service of inclusion. Future research should more fully investigate how virtue- and value-driven inclusive interpersonal behaviors can complement diversity policies in creating greater gender equity and inclusion.

Overcoming challenges of the PWO lens

Despite the bold strides of PWO research, past critiques have been levied against PWO scholarship, which also apply to the current proposal. Socio-cultural factors such as social norms, cultural values, social customs, and laws limit individual agency in applying a PWO lens to improve equity outcomes. For instance, in Western cultures where fame, self-aggrandizement, and androcentric corporate power structures are the status quo, virtuous behaviors in the workplace may be unsustainable and unpragmatic (Fineman 2006). In toxic environments, virtuous individuals are likely to languish rather than flourish ('no good deed goes unpunished'). As employees and organizations are embedded within a society, all individual- and organizational-level actions are inherently affected by broader socio-cultural barriers. However, whereas individual agency may undoubtedly be restricted by socio-cultural barriers, *organizations* might also be uniquely positioned to be agents of change by reflecting on their role in the broader culture as potential champions of inclusiveness (see Fligstein and McAdam 2011). Socio-cultural factors are not static, and large corporations can (and do) play important roles in shifting the broader culture

over time. For instance, recently, some mainstream organizations have taken a stand against gender inequity (e.g. UNWomen HeforShe corporate champions), racism (e.g. Nike; see Müller *et al.* 2008), and consumerism (Izberk-Bilgin 2010), and are attempting to shift societal norms. Such organizations, which also authentically 'walk the talk' and champion inclusiveness internally, can unleash organization-wide change and shift internal social norms (e.g. cultivating male champions of women) and structures (e.g. gender-balanced leadership) that improve equity (UNWomen 2018). Future research should examine how organizations can apply a PWO lens to become active and authentic agents of change, shifting external and internal narratives and structures.

Another challenge is negative unintended consequences of promoting a PWO lens at work (Furedi 2004), which amount to the misuse or abuse of the PWO lens. For instance, when a positive lens is overemphasized, negative emotional displays may become pathologized in the workplace, or managers may display a veneer of inclusiveness while maintaining oppressive power structures (Cameron 2013). Future research should more fully examine how organizations can guard against these abuses and responsibly apply the PWO lens. Finally, whereas the PWO lens is not a panacea, and may be susceptible to abuse just as other perspectives are, it has the potential to expand the repertoire of D&I approaches and produce novel insights. However, future research should be cautious in considering for whom, why, and under which conditions the application of the (admittedly optimistic) proposed model in this review is most effective, when it is not, and how to overcome unintended consequences.

Study limitations

This paper should be viewed in consideration of certain limitations. The review was based on an analysis of articles published in a select set of only 21 well-regarded journals. As a non-exhaustive survey of the literature, relevant articles published elsewhere are not captured by this review. In addition, based on past precedent (Joshi *et al.* 2015), the search terms used in this review were 'sex' and 'gender.' 'Women,' 'men,' 'female,' and 'male' were not used because these terms are routinely used to describe participant characteristics in empirical articles, and therefore were unhelpful in screening and identifying relevant gender-focused articles. Nonetheless, the restriction of search terms may have excluded some

relevant articles. Furthermore, as a review of empirical research on micro-level phenomena, it is outside the scope of this study to fully consider sociological concerns that might temper the proposals. Future scholarship should consider the relevance of the model from a sociological perspective.

Conclusion

This review addresses recent calls to action (e.g. Joshi *et al.* 2015; Shore *et al.* 2011) by highlighting PWO literature that holds promise for reinvigorating gender scholarship. Although there have been nuggets of bold, insightful research adopting such approaches over the years, we argue that they go under-acknowledged for their unique contributions to the broader management and gender literatures because the dominant problem-focused interpretive lens pushes them out of focus. Our review integrates such fragmented contributions and details how they deepen our understanding of how organizations can flourish through D&I. Our review also documents the imbalances in the current literature, highlights ways in which research from a positive perspective might more completely augment existing D&I research, and offers a theoretical framework that illustrates pathways to organizational flourishing through D&I. We hope the observations and insights in this review offer a foundation for inspiring theoretical innovations, engaging untapped stakeholders, and pointing to new pathways to equity and inclusiveness in gender research.

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