

## FROM THE EDITORS

### Thematic Issue on Gender in Management Research

# GENDER RESEARCH IN *AMJ*: AN OVERVIEW OF FIVE DECADES OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND CALLS TO ACTION

Fifteen years into the 21st century, gender equality appears to be at the forefront of the global humanitarian agenda. As a co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, Malala Yousafzai became a symbol for the rights of women and girls to obtain an education. In the same year, the United Nations launched the “HeForShe” campaign, which views men and boys as advocates and stakeholders in the campaign for gender equality around the world. Globally, equitable access to education and employment has been recognized as not only a “women’s issue” but as a *human rights* issue (UN Women, 2014).

There has been progress. In many developing countries, such as India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Liberia, Argentina, and Sri Lanka, women have long held key political offices, but, in the past three years, a record number of women have also stood for and voted in elections even at the grassroots level (UN Women, 2014). Within the United States, too, more women than ever before were sworn in to the 114th Congress and Senate, and the country’s presidential election of 2016 may likely feature more than one female presidential candidate. There has been a record increase in the number of women rising to CEO positions, a majority of women and mothers are now employed, and women outnumber men across many graduate and undergraduate programs (Pew Research Center, 2015).

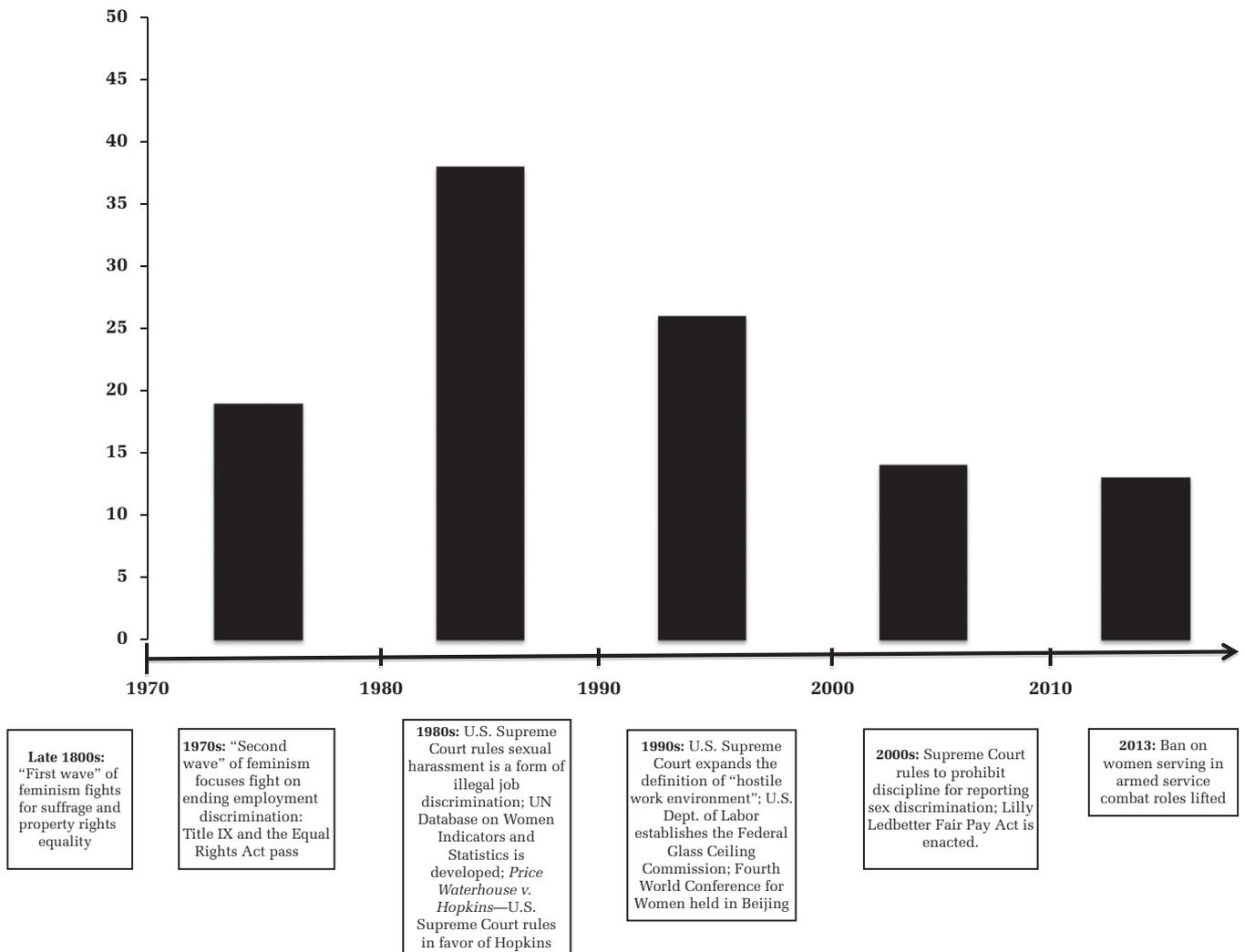
However, we also note several sobering trends. Violence against women and girls remains a global epidemic. In many parts of the developing world, such as Africa or South Asia, women also bear the brunt of natural disasters or civil strife, which severely restricts their opportunities to access a decent livelihood (e.g., George, Kotha, Parikh, Alnuaimi, & Bahaj, 2015). The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work is still borne by women who also face persistent barriers in accessing education and paid work due to lack of basic infrastructure such as running water or electricity (e.g., Parikh, Fu, Parikh, McRobie, & George, 2015). Women also continue to receive significantly lower pay than men in comparable jobs, and are under-represented at the highest levels in organizations (Catalyst, 2011; UN

Women, 2014). Sexism both overt and subtle remains pervasive in many professional domains, including academia where a number of disciplines continue to be highly male dominated (Bornmann, Mutz, & Daniel, 2007; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelman, 2012). Consider that, in business schools in the United States, women make up 40.6% of instructors and 37.3% of assistant professors, yet only 19.9% of full professors are women (Brown, 2015). In the United Kingdom, women constitute 22% of full professors across all disciplines and 18% of professors in many of the science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine fields (HESA, 2015). Taken together, these developments—both promising and problematic—raise the question of whether the movement toward gender equality has plateaued, or if there are signs of a renaissance? And, in the midst of recent media and policy attention, how can we as management scholars contribute to expanding and enriching the conversation on gender equality and inclusion?

As the “big tent,” flagship empirical journal of the Academy of Management, the *Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)* remains an influential periodical in the field, encompassing both micro and macro perspectives on organizational phenomena. As such, the articles published in *AMJ* on the topic of gender equality and diversity can be viewed as broadly reflective of the research trends on the topic in the sector. Moreover, with the journal closing in on six decades since its inception, we have a unique opportunity to take stock of key trends in research that has spanned several landmark events in the broader sociocultural milieu. This introduction to the thematic issue<sup>1</sup> on gender has a three-fold purpose: (1) to reflect on *AMJ*’s role in

<sup>1</sup> The articles in this thematic issue were accepted into the journal under normal review processes and were not part of any Special Research Forum call. The articles were assembled to bring out a theme and highlight phenomena and theories of interest across scholars who use micro and macro approaches to address important management and organizational problems. We thank Carol Kulik for her valuable inputs.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Gender Research in *AMJ*, 1970–2015**



publishing actionable gender research, (2) to analyze key trends in this research, and (3) to situate research published in *AMJ* in the transformative agenda to end gender inequality and discrimination.

#### **TRENDS IN GENDER RESEARCH IN *AMJ*: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD**

To analyze key trends, we undertook a content analysis of gender research published in *AMJ* spanning more than five decades. To begin with, we identified articles that used the terms “gender”/“sex” in the title and/or abstracts to include in the review. Next, three members of the author team independently read a subset of these articles to generate a list of categories that could be further coded. Two members of the author team then independently coded each article based on these

themes and resolved any discrepancies in coding through consensus. Our intent is not to position this editorial as a comprehensive review of gender research, but, rather, to highlight trends and themes that are revealed as salient in empirical research on gender in management.

#### **Trends and Themes in Gender Research Published in *AMJ* by Decade**

Between 1958 and 2015, *AMJ* published 107 articles with gender as a focal construct.<sup>2</sup> Below, we take stock of broad trends in this research, organized by decade. Figure 1 represents the frequency of articles

<sup>2</sup> We did not include articles that used gender only as a control variable in this discussion.

published, along with key societal developments related to gender.

**The '70s: Acknowledging the "plight of women."** Riding off of the second wave of feminism that focused on ending discrimination in the workplace and the passage of Civil Rights legislation in the United States, the earliest research on the topic of gender in *AMJ* was concerned with understanding if societal stereotypes and gender roles spilled over into the workplace, and whether these stereotypes and role expectations explained differences in leadership styles and preferences between men and women. For example, the first *AMJ* study on gender appeared in 1975 and asked whether men and women differed in their leadership styles (Chapman, 1975). Drawing on a sample of male and female leaders from one military and one civilian organization, the author concluded that, due to societal conditioning, when placed in a leadership position, "women may exhibit leadership behaviors which are significantly more relationship oriented than are those of their male counterparts; behaviors therefore which are more congruent with societal expectations" (Chapman, 1975: 649). This acknowledgment of how societal expectations and sex role stereotypes influence attitude, behavior, and reward differences between men and women remained an enduring and predominant theme in the research well beyond the 1970s. The decade culminated with Powell and Butterfield's (1979) study that set out to examine whether the "good manager" is one who embodied both masculine and feminine characteristics, and found instead that both men and women attributed "good" managerial qualities to a leader who displayed solely masculine traits. This study contributed to our understanding of the now well-known "think manager, think male" (Schein, 1973) phenomenon that continues to be one of the predominant themes in research on gender and leadership.

Overall, in the 1970s, *AMJ* published 19 articles that emphasized gender as a focal construct. Applying predominantly cross-sectional methodologies, these articles relied on both artificial and field settings, focusing on differences between men and women in attitudes and preferences, and on understanding whether men experienced preferential treatment over women in the workplace. Cumulatively, the studies represented mixed findings, with some showing that men and women did differ in their leadership styles and reward preferences but not necessarily in their attitudes toward work, and that these differences were contingent on the nature

of the jobs and attributes of supervisors (Cohen & Leavengood, 1978; Rose & Andiappan, 1978).

**The '80s: Identifying and understanding the barriers.** With 39 articles published between 1980 and 1989, this decade appears to have been a golden age for gender research based on the sheer volume of applicable studies published in *AMJ*. It is likely that the momentum from the second wave of feminism in the 1970s and scrutiny of employment practices to ensure compliance with requirements of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 drove this trend to a large extent. Scholars in this period cast a wider net in their efforts to identify barriers to gender equality by bringing evaluative biases in performance appraisals and job assignments into the overall narrative. Articles in this period also began to identify substantial differences between men and women in salary and promotions, and called for more theory building to understand the unique challenges that women faced in advancing in their careers (e.g., Mobley, 1982; Sigelman, Milward, & Shepard, 1982; Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982).

As in the 1970s, the predominant focus in the 1980s remained on identifying demand-side barriers to gender equality—that is, how women were perceived, evaluated, and rewarded at work. However, a study by Fottler and Bain (1980) also reported on supply-side barriers, finding that significant sex differences in occupational aspirations between men and women might explain differences in rates of entry into different professions. Stereotyping and sex role congruence remained predominant theoretical lenses through which researchers explained these effects. Notably, one study from this period also applied a tokenism perspective and examined the experiences of male tokens in the context of a nursing school, finding support for role entrapment and performance pressures among male nursing students (Fairhurst & Snaveley, 1983). Research also continued to support the notion that women did not benefit from showing masculine behaviors in leadership roles—finding, for instance, that reliance on an expert power base was detrimental for female leaders and beneficial to male leaders (Wiley & Eskilson, 1982).

We also find the beginnings of a shift in the level of analysis from a focus on sex differences at the individual level to acknowledging the role of manager-subordinate dyads in evaluative processes in organizations (Pulakos & Wexley, 1983). This golden age of gender research culminated with what remains one of the most highly cited articles on the topic in the journal:

Tsui and O'Reilly's (1989) study went "beyond simple demographic effects" to introduce the notion of relational demography by drawing on a sample of supervisor-subordinate dyads in organizations. The study showed that dissimilarity to the supervisor rather than the employee's gender predicted outcomes such as lower perceptions of performance and personal attraction to the subordinate. This concept had a lasting effect on how demographic effects were conceptualized in organizations and spawned research on demographic dissimilarity in dyads and groups.

**The '90s: Identifying (even more) barriers.** With just over 20 papers on the topic, the 1990s saw a sharp decline in the volume of gender research published in *AMJ*. This decline parallels concerns among feminist scholars about an overall weakening in the feminist movement as an organized collective force in the 1980s and 1990s. Factors such as a backlash against the movement itself and an overall polarization in U.S. and U.K. politics and culture around issues such as abortion, gun control, and privacy have been viewed as explanations for this decline (Crocco, 2004). Therefore, in this broader social context, the slowing rate of research on the topic of gender equality and diversity in the 1990s is perhaps not surprising. However, we noted a broader array of theoretical perspectives, ranging from human capital theory to social identity theory, and methods ranging from longitudinal to qualitative during this phase. Researchers also focused increasingly on career development and mentoring challenges for women, and attempted to identify barriers to managerial advancement among women (e.g., Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Reflecting a new awareness and interest in the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling," underscored by the establishment of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1991, the journal also published among the very first empirical investigations of this phenomenon (Powell & Butterfield, 1994). Of course, the theme of glass ceiling effects remains an enduring narrative in gender research to this day.

Overall, during this era, we noted a shift toward understanding how employment practices such as training and mentoring as well as other aspects of the work context (such as level of unionism; Bamberger, Admati-Dvir, & Harel, 1995) might shape male-female differences in rewards and performance. A seminal contribution during this period was Ely's (1995) multi-method examination of how women's

representation at higher levels in law firms shaped the meaning and significance of gender identity among lower-ranking women. This "power in demography" thesis has continued to shape subsequent research on how the gender composition of higher ranks benefits lower-ranking women, and Ely's is among the most highly cited articles during this period. Moving beyond stereotyping and sex role-based perspectives, overall in this decade, we note an effort to also trace how exclusionary social mechanisms grounded in interpersonal networks and access to mentoring and training (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994; Turban & Dougherty, 1994) explain gender inequality at work.

**The 2000s: From sex differences to dissimilarity and diversity.** Within the first 15 years of this millennium, we continued to see extensions of the themes discussed above, but with some additional noteworthy trends. First, going beyond male-female differences in employment-related attitudes and outcomes, we noted a shift in the levels of analysis to a focus on dissimilarity to the work group (e.g., Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004) and diversity at the work group and firm levels in relation to performance outcomes (e.g., Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004). A second theme was that researchers also began to take cross-level analytic approaches, and to examine how organization-level sex composition or the overall climate for gender inclusion influenced women's turnover (Elvira & Cohen, 2001; Nishii, 2013) and performance and reward differences between men and women (Joshi, Liao, & Jackson, 2006). Going beyond sex-based attributional and stereotyping-based processes at the individual level of analysis, these studies emphasized top-down contextual influences on gender inequality in organizations.

A third trend in research conducted in this phase was a recognition of the multiple demands of work and family on men and women, and the role of flexible work practices in closing the gap between men and women (e.g., Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). Among the most highly cited articles on this topic, Ruderman and colleagues' multi-method investigation of relationships between multiple life roles and managerial skills among female managers showed that commitment to multiple roles enhanced both interpersonal and task-related managerial skills among women (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002).

During this period, authors also began to directly address the unique challenges faced by women—specifically, the implications of pregnancy for work-related outcomes (Ladge, Clair, & Greenberg, 2012). Furthering this trend, presenting results from multiple studies employing a mix of qualitative and longitudinal designs, Little and colleagues presented an in-depth examination of the motives and strategies of pregnant workers to maintain their professional images, and the implications of these strategies for perceived discrimination, burnout, and return to work (Little, Major, Hinojosa, & Nelson, 2015). With a growing number of working mothers entering and returning to the workforce, this emphasis on work–family balance and pregnancy at work suggests to us that the narrative has moved beyond looking for whether women “fit” normative expectations of “leader”/“manager” at work to explicitly acknowledging how social roles, such as motherhood, that are unique to women have real consequences for their work lives.

**The current issue.** The five papers in this thematic issue mark a resurgence in the interest on gender issues in *AMJ*. Together, they both expand the theoretical focus as well as deepen our understanding of causal mechanisms explaining gender effects across disparate work contexts and spanning individual, group, and firm levels of analysis. In their paper on over-emergence of leadership, Lanaj and Hollenbeck (this issue) unite two well-established and complementary theoretical perspectives—gender role theory and expectancy violation theory—to shed light on how gender influences the phenomenon of leadership over-emergence in self-managing work teams. This research highlights a countervailing gender bias that works in the favor of women who engage in agentic behaviors in the context of these teams. Cumming, Leung, and Rui (this issue) draw on ethicality and risk-aversion perspectives in a study of boards of directors across Chinese firms that committed securities fraud. They find that gender diversity on a board both reduces the frequency of fraud as well as negative investor reactions to announcements of fraud. Focusing on diversity at the work group level, Chung et al. (this issue) apply a faultlines perspective to show that the effects of gender-based faultlines differ from the effects of functional faultlines on loyal behavior in work groups. However, these effects are also contingent on the diversity climates of the work groups—more supportive climates mitigated the negative effects of gender-based faultlines. This issue also includes two quantitative reviews that take

markedly different theoretical stances on the effects of gender. Where Post and Byron (this issue)<sup>3</sup> focus on whether the effects of board gender composition on financial outcomes vary by the sociocultural and regulatory context of the firm, Joshi, Son, and Roh (this issue) examine how occupational-, industry-, and job-level factors mitigate or enhance performance and reward differences between men and women. Both papers expand the focus of gender research in *AMJ* by bringing in strategic and sociological perspectives on how gender effects manifest at firm and individual levels of analysis, respectively.

### Trends and Themes in Gender Research Published in *AMJ* across Decades

Having put forth an overview of research organized by decade, we now turn to key themes that we see as trends over time in research on gender in *AMJ*. These prominent trends are captured by our descriptive analysis based on the coding of articles in our database. We note three broad trends, and, in the subsequent section, discuss how these themes may inform future research on gender.

**Theoretical saturation or declining interest?** An overarching theme in our analysis of gender research is a sharp decline in the frequency of articles published on the topic of gender since the 1980s (see Figure 1). Although we noted broader sociopolitical trends explaining this propensity, we also took a closer look at the various approaches to theorizing about gender inequality, discrimination, or diversity in *AMJ* to better understand the decline. Based on Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007), we coded two types of approaches to theorizing about gender: (1) theory testing and (2) theory building. “Theory testing” referred to articles that built their frameworks either by drawing on existing conceptual arguments and/or in terms of resolving conflicting findings from previous research. We classified “theory-building” articles as those that highlighted a new construct or process that was previously unexplored in gender research (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007).

Our content analysis revealed several theory-building efforts reflected in the introduction of

<sup>3</sup> We also acknowledge that a meta-analysis by Pletzer, Nikolova, Kedzior, and Voelpel (2015) of female representation on corporate boards and financial performance was published recently, but note substantive differences in the approach taken in these two papers.

**TABLE 1**  
**Theoretical Frameworks of Gender Research Published in *AMJ*<sup>a</sup>**

Theoretical Framing	Illustrative Studies	Research Questions	Outcomes Measured	Frequency (%)
<i>Sex-based stereotyping</i>				22.0
Role congruence/ job fit	Petty & Bruning (1980)	Sex role congruence effects on the relationship between subordinate perceptions of leader behavior and subordinate job satisfaction	Subordinate job satisfaction	
	Kent & Moss (1994)	Sex and gender role effects on group leadership emergence	Self-perceived leader emergence Group-perceived leader emergence	
Attributional and evaluative bias	Heilman, Block, & Stathatos (1997)	Effects of stigma of affirmative action on perceptions of competence and performance	Competence ratings	
	Leslie, Mayer, & Kravitz (2013)	Negative impact of affirmative action plans on performance evaluations	Salary increase recommendations Performance evaluations	
Sex roles	Powell & Butterfield (1979)	Perceptions and descriptions of the "good manager" as being androgynous or masculine	Descriptions of a typical "good manager"	
	Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein (1989)	Examining changes in perceived requisite management characteristics	Depictions of typical managers in various levels	
Discrimination	Dubno (1985)	Longitudinal investigation of attitudes toward women executives	Attitudes toward female executives	
	Hekman, Aquino, Owens, Mitchell, Schilpzand, & Leavitt (2010)	Racial and gender biases' influence on customer satisfaction ratings	Customer satisfaction ratings	
<i>Structural and institutional perspectives</i>				11.0
	Elvira & Cohen (2001)	Effects of organizational sex composition at various job levels on the turnover of men and women across levels	Turnover	
	Joshi et al. (2006)	Effects of managerial sex composition on sex differences in performance and pay in sales teams	Salary, bonus, sales performance	
Legal perspectives	Terpstra & Baker (1988)	Relationship between sexual harassment incidents and outcomes of charges	Sexual harassment case outcomes	
	Terpstra & Baker (1992)	Influence of case characteristics on outcomes of federal court cases involving sexual harassment	Court case judgments	
Organizational structure and practices	Sigelman et al. (1982)	Salary differences between male and female higher education administrators	Pay differential	
	Madigan & Hoover (1986)	Effects of job evaluation methods on job classification decisions and inferences of the equity of job hierarchy	Pay equity decisions	
<i>Sex differences</i>				10.0
Career/job experiences	Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley (1994)	Gender differences in exposure to developmental job opportunities	Developmental opportunities	
	Judiesch & Lyness (1999)	Impact of leaves of absence on subsequent career trajectory and success	Performance ratings	
Motivations/ aspirations	Gomez-Mejia (1983)	Effect of individual differences in work attitudes of men and women	Rewards Job involvement	
	Lefkowitz (1994)	Effect of organizational- and individual-level variables on sex difference in job reactions	Attitudinal measures	

**TABLE 1**  
**(Continued)**

Theoretical Framing	Illustrative Studies	Research Questions	Outcomes Measured	Frequency (%)
<i>Social identity/similarity attraction</i>	Ely (1995)	Influence of female representation in high-level positions on women's social constructions of gender difference and identity in the workplace	Job reactions Dispositional attributes Perceptions of group differences	7.0
	Chatman & O'Reilly (2004)	Effect of gender on reactions to group gender homogeneity	Perceptions of success requirements Self-perceptions Group membership preference Perceived group cooperation	
	Tsui & O'Reilly III (1989)	Establishment of the influence of relational demography on supervisor and subordinate perceptions	Performance effectiveness ratings Subordinate task and role ambiguity	
<i>Tokenism</i>	Stewart & Gudykunst (1982)	Examining individual factors influencing the promotion of men and women	Job grade	5.5
	Powell & Butterfield (1994)	Direct and indirect effects of applicant gender on promotion decisions for top management positions; testing the glass ceiling effect	Promotions Promotion decision outcomes	
<i>Mentorship theory</i>	Ragins & Cotton (1991)	Perceived barriers to mentorship attainment	Barriers to mentorship	2.7
	Turban & Dougherty (1994)	Relationships among protégé personality characteristics, mentorship seeking behaviors, and career success	Need for mentorship Mentorship received Career success	
<i>Social capital theory</i>	Mehra et al. (1998)	Marginalization of race and gender minority members and its effect on friendship group development	Structural marginality	2.7
	Gersick, Dutton, & Bartunek (2000)	Impact of workplace relationships on career success among business school faculty	Career-assisting help networks	
<i>Social-sexual behavior and harassment</i>	Pierce, Aguinis, & Adams (2000)	Judgments about dissolved workplace romances and recommended personnel actions	Recommended personnel action	1.8
	Raver & Gelfand (2005)	Team-level effects of team ambient sexual harassment on team functioning and performance	Team relationship conflict Team cohesion Team citizenship behavior	
<i>Work-family conflict</i>	Ruderman et al. (2002)	Benefits of multiple life roles on psychological well-being and managerial skills for managerial women	Managerial skills	3.6

**TABLE 1**  
**(Continued)**

Theoretical Framing	Illustrative Studies	Research Questions	Outcomes Measured	Frequency (%)
<i>Feminist views (masculinity/paternalism)</i>	Martins et al. (2002)	Investigation of the impact of individual differences on the negative relationship between work–family conflict and career satisfaction	Psychological well-being	1.8
	Tharenou (2001)	Effects of individual traits and interpersonal support on advancement from entry level to upper management	Career satisfaction	
	Bemmels (1988)	Gender effects in discipline grievance situations	Managerial advancement	
<i>Social comparison theory</i>			Arbitration decisions	1.8
	Major & Konar (1984)	Differences in pay expectations of male and female management students	Suspension length	
	Gomez-Mejia & Balkin (1984)	Relationship between faculty union membership and job satisfaction	Pay expectations	
			Pay satisfaction	

<sup>a</sup> We included theoretical perspectives that were applied in at least 1% of the articles published in *AMJ*. The articles listed here are an illustrative but not exhaustive list. The articles coded for the review often drew on more than one perspective, and, in these cases, we coded the predominant approach taken by the author(s) to develop their hypotheses and explain their results.

constructs such as “relational demography” (Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989) and the “power in demography” (Ely, 1995). A majority of the articles we coded, however, could be classified as theory testers. These articles focused on applying multiple theoretical frameworks to frame hypotheses and to explain conflicting findings in past research (see Figure 2). While theory testing is a vital endeavor, one explanation for the declining frequency of articles in the post-1980s era could be that, after a spate of theory testing based on a finite set of theoretical frames such as sex-based stereotyping, researchers may have simply exhausted new avenues for research.

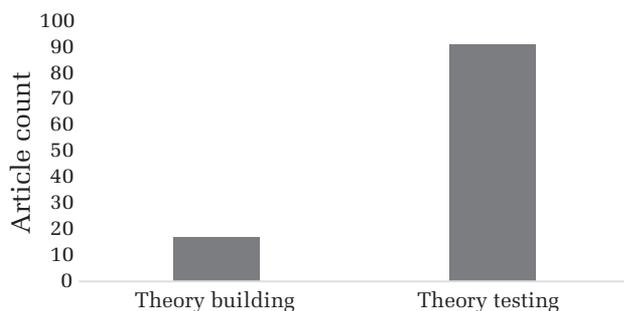
Another explanation for the decline in gender research may also be that there is a “gender fatigue” and

even a weariness with gender research in business schools (e.g., Kelan, 2009). Coupled with the fact that many business schools continue to remain highly male-dominated environments, particularly among senior and tenure-track faculty ranks, this fatigue may signal a possible marginalization of gender research as well. The rise of specialized journals in gender and feminist studies offer alternative outlets for gender research, but these journals do not often make the top-tier list of journals in business schools. Therefore, it is possible that not only are researchers likely to be weary of gender research, they may also view it as more risky for obtaining promotion and tenure.

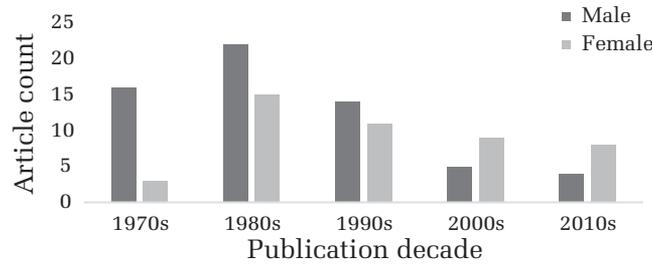
We note, too, that gender research in *AMJ* has also been male-author dominated (Figure 3). Does the male domination of gender research explain its decline? Are male researchers more apt to be discouraged from conducting gender research, or more susceptible to “gender fatigue”? We call for a deeper examination of these issues across the divisions and interest groups of the Academy of Management. On a more positive note, however, we do see a spike in articles in *AMJ* since the 2010s, and hope that this trend represents a resurgence of interest among both male and female scholars. In the post-2008 economy, the “war for talent” in the United States as well as in emerging markets is once again gaining ground, and this resurgence may also reflect the overall concern for attracting and retaining skilled workers.

**FIGURE 2**

**Approaches to Theorizing in Gender Research**



**FIGURE 3**  
First Author Gender



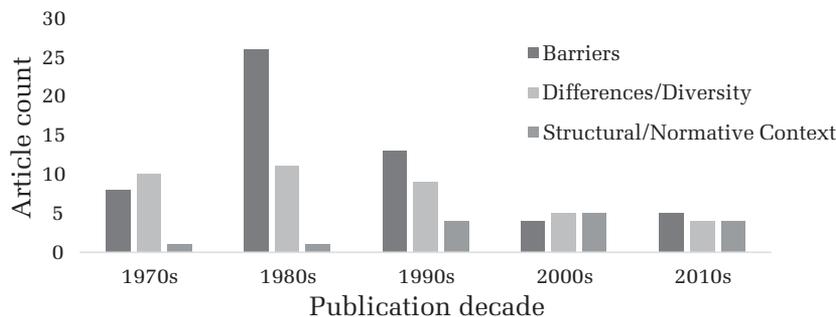
**From the “plight of women” to integrating differences.** Apart from the frequency of research, we also note a shift in the *content* of gender research published over the years. We coded three types of content areas to reflect how authors approached gender issues in the workplace. First, we defined “barriers framing” content as research that relied on the basic logic that, since societal expectations have tended to assign men more readily to managerial roles, women in these roles face bias and discrimination. Early research on gender issues was primarily focused on identifying barriers to advancement and equitable rewards for women (see Figure 4). And, over the years, researchers have continued to apply specific theoretical lenses to identify psychological and structural mechanisms that explained these barriers. A second type of “differences/diversity” framing in gender research has highlighted the differences in the leadership or work styles, preferences, aspirations, and motivations between men and women in order to explain differences in employment outcomes and to identify ways in which organizations can accommodate and integrate across differences between men and women. Finally, a third type of “structural/normative context” framing has focused on how the organizational

context shapes the experiences of men and women in the workplace. These studies have been aimed at identifying how the demography, culture, or climate of the firm influences employment outcomes for men and women. Of the three types of framing for gender research, “barriers framing” was a predominant theme across the decades.

While “barriers framing” was no doubt valuable in bringing challenges that women faced at work to light, taken together with the declining rate of research being published on the topic, we surmise that the types of barriers and the mechanisms through which they operate at work are reaching a state of saturation. We discern a slight relative increase in the framing of gender issues in terms of different styles and preferences that men and women have and the implications of these differences for workplace attitudes and behaviors (see Figure 4). However, this marginal increase has not been sufficient to overcome the decline in gender research overall. We infer that the saturation explanation may also apply to theorizing about how sex differences in motivations and aspirations shape work outcomes.

**From anecdotal logic to nuanced causal mechanisms.** Another pattern in research in *AMJ* across the five decades has been a shift in the type of

**FIGURE 4**  
Framing of Gender Issues



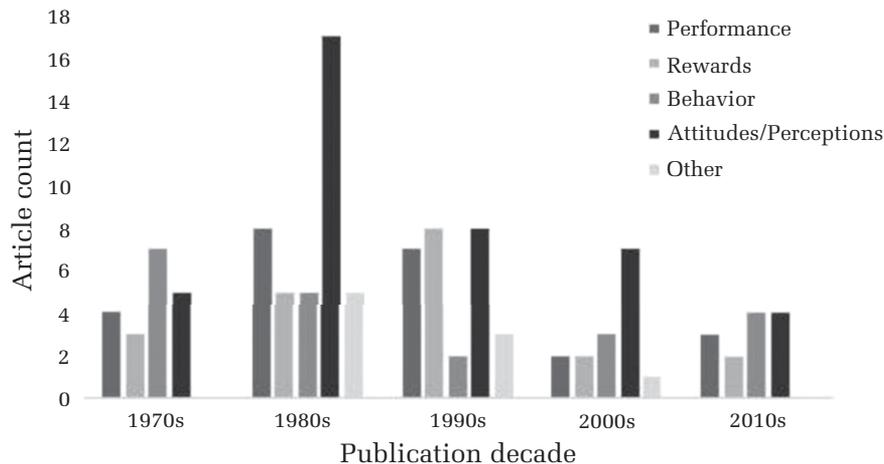
analytic approaches taken by scholars. Early studies on the topic were often grounded in resolving discrepancies in past findings, or based on the anecdotal accounts of bias against women in managerial roles. Over the years, however, the narrative has become increasingly sophisticated, examining multiple types of outcomes including performance, behaviors, and attitudes (see Figure 5) across individual, group, and firm levels of analysis (see Figure 6). We note an increase in the trend in examining outcomes at the group and firm levels of analysis, but would point out that the latter studies have often conflated gender with other diversity variables. Studies in which gender was a focal attribute were primarily focused on individual-level outcomes. Additionally, the work published in *AMJ* has predominantly used field data over the decades (see Figure 7), and, while field research on attitudes and biases is amenable to generalizability, laboratory research is perhaps more suited to uncovering implicit biases that may be masked by social desirability effects and other confounds in the field. A handful of studies have used multi-method approaches to develop a holistic understanding of gender discrimination in field as well as experimental settings (e.g., Hekman et al., 2010), and we view this to be a promising trend for future research.

**The burden of action.** We note that the predominant focus on barriers that women face at work is also reflected in the types of practical implications that scholars have proposed based on research findings. Overall, only about half of the articles in our database provided directions for practice, and, among those that did, a content analysis of the

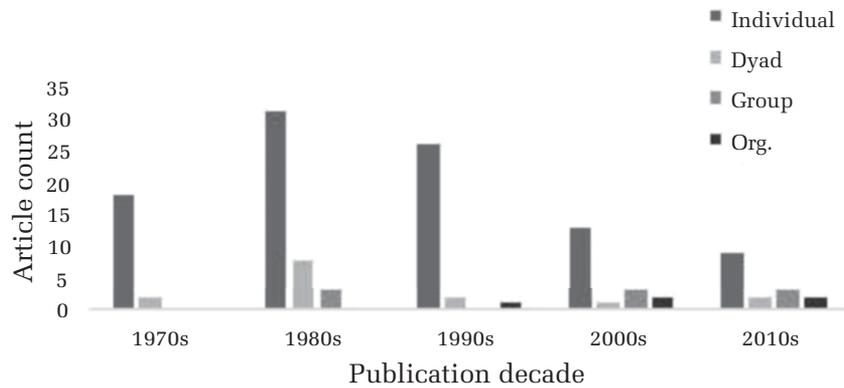
practical implications section showed that the burden of action in published research has been placed on diversity training and other diversity management interventions aimed at reducing gender bias (see Figure 8). For example, studies focusing on the “glass ceiling effect” discussed revisions in organizations’ promotion procedures such as promoting from within (e.g., Powell & Butterfield, 1994), while studies that focused on sexual harassment suggested greater gender integration at higher levels (e.g., Raver & Gelfand, 2005). A smaller set of studies also examined interventions directed at managers and supervisors, such as desexualizing contact between men and women at work to reduce incidence of harassment, or rater training to avoid bias in performance evaluations (e.g., Hall & Hall, 1976). A subset of studies also discussed implications directed specifically at women—for instance, recommending that women seek cross-gender mentoring relationships (e.g., Ragins & Cotton, 1991), or increasing awareness among women about the career penalties associated with taking leaves of absence (e.g., Judiesch & Lyness, 1999).

The papers presented in this thematic issue also propose a wide spectrum of practical interventions for women, organizations, and managers in general. For instance, Lanaj and Hollenbeck (this issue) exhort women to take “active steps” to engage in agentic behavior in order to overcome gender bias. Chung and colleagues (this issue) suggest that organizations make efforts to implement bias-free human resource management practices, and training and education programs aimed at developing a positive climate for diversity. Post and Byron (this issue)

**FIGURE 5**  
**Outcomes Examined in Gender Research**



**FIGURE 6**  
**Level of Analysis for Outcomes**



along with Cummings and colleagues (this issue), propose efforts to adopt a more inclusive climate at the board level and actively enhance gender diversity on boards to increase financial performance and mitigate negative outcomes such as fraud. Finally, Joshi and colleagues (this issue) highlight interventions aimed at increasing accountability and scrutiny of performance evaluation and reward allocation procedures, designing jobs to reduce the potential for bias, and offering extra-organizational networking opportunities for women. Yet, overall, how successful are these proposed interventions likely to be in fostering real change in organizations? We reflect on this question in the next section.

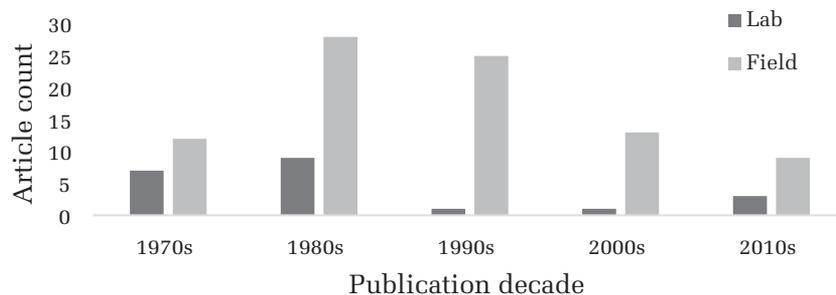
**MOVING THE AGENDA FORWARD**

This retrospective view of gender research in *AMJ* may be informative, but it does not go far enough in helping us understand how scholars can translate their research into ways to move organizations toward gender parity. In what follows, we integrate our descriptive analysis of trends with the efforts of

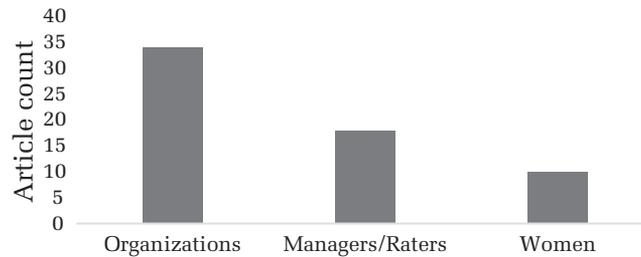
Catalyst, a non-profit organization that has been on the forefront of developing bridges between research and practice for more than five decades. The Catalyst team led a series of discussions with two important stakeholder groups—scholars and managers—in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges for bringing about change in the workplace, and to develop guidelines for conducting actionable research in the future. At the outset, their conversations with these two groups and our analysis highlight one important area of convergence: a sense of frustration with not being able to move the needle on gender parity forward. The declining frequency of gender-related articles in *AMJ* along with a shared sense among researchers and managers that their considerable energies in conducting research or developing inclusive workplace practices have not led to progress in the workplace is, therefore, a critical issue that we need to address.

We approach the concerns about the stalling of gender research and of the movement toward gender parity in two ways. First, we combine insights from our analysis of research published in *AMJ* with

**FIGURE 7**  
**Research Settings in Gender Research**



**FIGURE 8**  
**Focus of Practical Implications**



interviews that the Catalyst team conducted with several researchers who have been on the forefront of gender research in management and related field journals. These conversations reflect the academic's prospective view on making a tangible difference. Second, we draw on Catalyst's experience and expertise in conveying research to managers in order to highlight a roadmap for engaging in actionable research in *AMJ* and elsewhere.

#### **Calls to Action: Where Do We Go from Here?**

The Catalyst team spoke with nearly 30 scholars<sup>4</sup> who have worked in this area—some for many decades, some for a few years—in order to ascertain key research directions that they believed could both identify and address the remaining obstacles for women's advancement. We believe that the themes presented in the retrospective overview of research intersect with these directions, which we present as “calls to action” for future research in the journal.

**Call to action #1: To identify major barriers to women's advancement, don't focus (only) on women.** Despite dramatic human capital gains, since the 1990s, women have been unable to further narrow the gap in wages and other organizational rewards (e.g., Blau & Kahn, 2007). As noted above, this apparent stagnation in the movement toward gender parity was a predominant concern among the scholars. More specifically, those interviewed noted that

women have achieved what can be viewed as the “low-hanging fruits” of enhancing skills, labor market experience, and education in the Western world. But what remains to be accomplished lies outside the control of women. Lowering barriers to women's advancement will involve, among other things, re-examining how the changing norms around work that, since the 1990s, have emphasized longer and more intensive hours, disadvantage women who remain primary care-givers in most households (Cha & Weeden, 2014). Identifying factors that lie outside the control of women also requires greater scrutiny into men's roles and responsibilities in both the work and family spheres. Under what circumstances might men challenge the norm of overwork or be motivated to be more involved in domestic chores? Moreover, in line with the HeForShe campaign initiated by the United Nations, under what circumstances can men be motivated to serve as equal participants and advocates for women in the workplace? These types of questions illustrate a research agenda that does not view gender inequality as primarily a “women's issue” and that is also poised to address persistent barriers to gender inclusion. We note that, across the globe, in corporate settings as well there is a growing recognition of the role that male champions can play in fostering gender diversity and inclusion (see, for instance, the website [malechampionsofchange.com](http://malechampionsofchange.com)), and we view this as a promising trend for moving the needle toward gender parity forward.

**Call to action #2: Stop trying to address structural issues at the individual level.** Many themes that emerged in response to the question “What explains barriers to women's advancement?” were aligned with the types of topics studied in *AMJ* and other management journals over the past five decades. These themes—bias, gender stereotypes, gender norms, work–life balance, differences in women's and men's behavior and preferences—have been the key ingredients of the gender research

<sup>4</sup> We thank the following scholars for informing this section by participating in “Convening Conversations at Catalyst”: Tammy Allen, Lotte Bailyn, Diana Bilimoria, Victoria Brescoll, Michelle Budig, Susan Clancy, Marianne Cooper, Gelaye Debebe, George Dreher, Joyce Ehrlinger, Jennifer Glass, Peter Glick, Alex Haslam, Jennifer Hoobler, Aparna Joshi, Laura Kray, Ioana Latu, Richard Martell, Sonya Michel, Phyllis Moen, Corinne Moss-Racusin, Deborah O'Neill, Belle Rose Ragins, Alexis Smith, Melissa Thomas-Hunt, Robert Wood.

reviewed above as well. However, the scholars interviewed also noted that this “sex differences” approach to gender research is limiting (see also Ely & Padavic, 2007). Rather, they highlighted the need to take a structural perspective to *reverse* gender discrimination in the workplace. Such an approach would involve going beyond the barriers framing that has dominated the field to an in-depth appraisal of how ostensibly *gender-neutral* practices, mechanisms, and processes at the job, work group, and organizational levels of analysis could jointly be harnessed as avenues to positively impact women and men’s working lives and to promote gender inclusion.

**Call to action #3: Recognize that not-so-subtle bias is alive and well—it just lives elsewhere.** An overwhelming number of studies in our database are based on samples that are located in the United States/North America. In this context, there has been a recognition that overt and visible bias is less likely, due to legal pressures, and some scholars have noted a need to further understand subtle biases at work. While this shift in focus from overt to covert bias is important in the Western world, it is less relevant for many other parts of the globe (Metz & Kulik, 2014). Note that a majority of the countries in the developing world (e.g., India) do not have laws prohibiting employers from asking about family status during hiring. Therefore, it is common for hiring managers/recruiters to consider an applicant’s age, gender, and socioeconomic background as factors in making a hiring decision. Consider this statement from a hiring manager in India reported by the Catalyst team:

She’s 26 years old and comes from a tier 2 city. Soon, she may marry someone from a metropolitan city and move there and/or have children and leave the job. She’s a risky hire.

What theoretical lenses or methodological approaches framing extant research would be appropriate for studying gender issues in these settings? We believe that, while the barriers framing emerging from the feminist and equal employment opportunity laws in the United States led the initial surge in gender research, it is likely that the next wave of research will be guided by the increasing awareness and acknowledgment of gender issues in emerging markets and in less developed parts of the world.

**Call to action #4: Focus on the glass ceiling, but acknowledge barriers beyond organizations.** Across the decades, a clear theme, informed by the chronic underrepresentation of women at the highest levels in organizations in the Western world, was

focused on understanding what holds the glass ceiling in place in organizations, and how women can break through it. However, in many parts of the world, basic equality issues remain a challenge for women. But these barriers—institutional and cultural—extend beyond the boundaries of corporate profit-making organizations. For example, women are barred (legally or culturally) from working, driving, marrying, or gaining an education without a man’s approval. These societal barriers fall beyond the purview of a single organization. What would be appropriate research sites in these societal contexts? Can we extend management theories to shed light on the tactics of non-governmental organizations or the media in bringing about change within organizations? Related to our comments above, extending the focus of gender equality and inclusion research beyond the Western world could offer further opportunities to acknowledge a new set of barriers to women’s advancement that lie outside the scope of organizations and yet have important implications for gender integration within these organizations.

### Converting the Research into Action: What Do We Do with What We Know?

This agenda for future gender research is both important and ambitious. However, successfully converting this research into action is reliant on the receptivity of another important stakeholder group—managers who are on the forefront of implementing organizational change and better governance practices (Tihanyi, Graffin, & George, 2014). Argyris (1996) noted that because the universe of management is created by managers, management theory should serve managerial action. The universe of gender inequality or discrimination in the workplace that we have outlined above is also a universe that is inhabited (if not created) by managers. How can we ensure that the cumulative knowledge on the topic of gender informs managerial action aimed at limiting gender inequality or discrimination in the years to come?

**Map the manager’s universe.** The universe of managers is diverse. Although, as researchers, we have a tendency to address “managers” as a monolithic group, they in fact represent a variegated set of senior executives and diversity/inclusion officers within firms with varying skill and motivation levels. The firms that employ these managers are also diverse. Catalyst, for example, has recognized that some organizations are “leading edge,” some are “making progress,” and others are just “getting started.” This evaluation is a way to gauge where and how research

can meet the needs of organizations. We also note that, while organizations espouse a commitment to diversity, the success of a partnership with an organization lies in the passion, commitment, and interest of managers in engaging with the researcher. Therefore, understanding where a manager lies on this continuum is a crucial first step in our journey toward the manager's universe if we are to convey our research findings or gain access to research sites.

**Preach to the choir.** Organizations and senior executives that promote gender equality best are those that regard it as both "the right thing to do" and "good for business." For these reasons, they treat equality and inclusion as they would treat any other critical element of their strategies: they develop objectives, goals, and metrics. And then they hold themselves and others accountable for achieving and meeting these targets. Although scholars often express frustration about "preaching to the choir" at conferences and roundtables, we *should* target the choir or "leading-edge" organizations and leaders. And they will put our insights to good use. Being at the vanguard of their peers is a coveted spot for these firms, and, by reaching out to them, we can hope that others will follow their lead.

**Speak the language.** Conversations with executives reveal that they are interested in the same topics that gender research in *AMJ* has covered to date: gender stereotypes and bias, career development, work-life balance, and developing an inclusive culture. However, the language through which these messages are conveyed varies. Indeed, it is unlikely that the latest issue of *AMJ* (even this one) will grace the manager's office table, tablet, or other media device. We believe that this is where outlets like *AMJ* can play a role in further disseminating and translating research findings so that this research leads to action. In their experience with executives, Catalyst finds that, if conveyed through the right media sources, many managers will quickly grasp the nuances, see the implications, and gain ideas and inspiration through research such as ours. *AMJ*, for instance, has recently launched a "dynamic edition" in addition to our print mode that features short video and audio clips that translate empirical findings for managerial consumption.

#### THE GRAND CHALLENGE FACING GENDER RESEARCH

Although we aimed to provide an overview of gender research in *AMJ*, shared the cumulative wisdom of colleagues conducting cutting-edge research, and

offered some basic guidelines for bringing about change in organizations, we are fully aware that we are offering only a small sliver of a huge canvas. As scholars trained in a Western tradition and inhabiting the developed world, our very vantage point on gender research is one of privilege. We are mindful of and indeed humbled by the barriers that girls and women face and the challenges they need to overcome on a daily basis to access even the most rudimentary of human needs—safety, security and access to a decent livelihood. Grasping the true implications of these challenges for managerial theory and research is a grand challenge like no other. It is a challenge that forces us to reach across our disciplinary silos to offer truly innovative and novel insights in the years to come. Fifteen years into the twenty-first century is indeed an opportune time to take stock of management research on gender. It is also time to challenge ourselves as engaged scholars to go both broader and deeper into understanding the many complexities that define gender inequality on the global stage.

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