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## Human Resource Research Paper 37

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"Gender, Ethnic Diversity and Career Advancement in the Workplace: The Social Identity Perspective"

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### Original Appearance:

"Gender, Ethnic Diversity and Career Advancement in the Workplace: The Social Identity Perspective"

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### Introduction

Effectively managing demographic diversity in the workplace is an increasing challenge. Attention is directed to the way that demographic composition shapes our organizational life. The justification for promoting diversity and multicultural work environment is based on the claim that such policies will create better decision-making processes in the organization, greater creativity and innovation, and increased business competitiveness (Cox, 1991). Organization can fully utilize its diverse human resource talents to sustain its competitive advantage and fulfill its compliance with requirements of equal opportunities.



Social identity theory (Tajful & Turner 1986; Ashforth & Mael 1989) suggests that people classify themselves and others into social categories based on some salient characteristics, such as gender, race and ethnicity. They identify more with members who are similar to their own category (in-group) than with out-group members. Such distinction and attachment affects their group- and self- attribution, including stereotypic attribution. The consequences of socially constructed identities are in-group favoritism, negative stereotyping and subordinating of out-groups, inter-group competition and role conflict (Wharton 1992). The bias and unfair treatments subsequently resulted in exclusion of minorities in group membership and important organizational decision-making, differential access to support, which in turn will jeopardize their career advancement opportunity. The perception of unfair treatment eventually creates an overall negative work environment for all employees (Capozza & Brown 2000). Generally, the less prejudicial personal attitudes and less discriminatory organizational policies, the more accepting of diversity (pluralistic) the organizational climate is (Cox, 1991).

The purpose of this study is to examine a number of pertinent issues regarding gender and ethnic group participation at work. The issues examined include effective utilization of human resources, workers' perception of their work environment, participation in decision making, support from managers and colleagues as well as opportunities for career advancement. Do gender and ethnic groups have a different perception on organizational supports and career advancement within their work organization? We focus on three specific issues: Do members of gender and ethnic groups perceive different level of inclusion and support within their organization? Are there any group differences in their reaction to attitudinal responses in atmosphere and commitment? Are there group differences in the extent to which perceived support is linked to career advancement measured in number of promotions? These issues will be investigated from the perspective of social identity theory, and organizational demography.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework for the present study is depicted in Figure 1. Work group's roles can be viewed from task and maintenance function (Benne & Sheats 1948). The task function consists of keeping the team on track and getting the work done. Maintenance function consists of behavior that fosters constructive relationships among team members. In the present study, task function refers to involvement in committee membership, views accepted at meetings, consultation from managers, assistance from managers and colleagues. Maintenance functions include commendation and feedback from managers, volunteer to provide input, access to external information, work atmosphere and attitude.

Social identity theory provides the connection between social structures and individual identity through the meanings people attach to their memberships in salient identity groups, such as racial, ethnic, or gender (Tajfel 1982). These meanings, in turn, shape the social interactions with members of their own identity groups or from other groups (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Demographic characteristics of organization, such as gender, race distributions, and group composition, shape the meaning people attached to their identity group membership at work. Social identity serves as a source of shared experience and mutual support for in-group members. The disproportionate representation of some identity groups over others may have a negative impact on the social structure and interactions in the workplace (Ely 1995; Wharton 1992). Thus, social identity theory has direct relevance for the study of socio-demographic diversity within organizations by having a membership that is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. We use social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg 1990; Ashforth & Mael

1989; Kawakami & Dion 1995; Tajfel 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and research on organizational demography (Ely 1994) to develop our hypotheses.

Social identity and organizational demography literature pinpoints that people prefer to interact with members of their own identity group than with members of other groups. Because white males tend to predominate in higher positions while females and other ethnic minorities tend to occupy more junior positions. Thus, it may create in-group favoritism for White males. Status differences between groups generate negative feelings in members of low-status groups about their group identity (Ashforth & Mael 1989). Work relationships among women and racial minorities are likely to be negatively affected when large status disparities exist. Group membership, therefore, is a powerful variable influencing attitudes toward the value of diversity for the organization. Experiences of racism and sexism shared by women and members of different racial/ethnic groups affect their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.

There is ample evidence of the differential treatment experienced by racial/ethnic minorities and women in the workplace. One of the most frequently reported problems faced by women and minorities in organizational settings is their limited access to or exclusion from informal interaction networks (Ely 1995; Miller 1986; Morrison & Von Glinow 1990). These networks allocate a variety of instrumental resources that are critical for performance and career advancement as well as social support and friendship (Ibarra 1993).

According to Alderfer and Smith (1982), Whites see the advantage of Blacks arising from affirmative action, and Blacks see the advantage of whites deriving from numerical control of influential positions and committees. We expect that minorities will perceive the organizational diversity climate less favorably than White majority and women will perceive it less favorably than men. We anticipate differences in perceptions within gender and ethnic groups that may be related to their memberships in specific organizational groups.

Previous research points to the existence of racial and ethnic differences in perceptions of fairness and discrimination in organizations (Parker et al. 1997). Minorities in organizations receive fewer opportunities for training and development that prepare them for additional responsibilities, do not receive as much important career information (Ohlott et al. 1994). Similarly, women tend to have less access to a variety of resources in the organization, such as income, position, and information, than do men (Alderfer 1987). As a result of skewed sex ratio, females are often excluded from information networks and not being recognized for their achievements (Kanter 1977).

The existing literature indicates that women and members of racial/ethnic minority groups are exposed to discrimination and exclusion in the workplace more often than are White men. Having experienced institutional discrimination due to race/ethnicity, people of colour are more likely to perceive organizational policies and procedures less favorably than White men and women (Barak et al. 1998). Similarly, having experienced organizational barriers due to gender, women are more likely to view organizational policies and procedures less favorably than men. Females and ethnic minorities tend to have more negative work attitudes, and less satisfied with promotional opportunities.

Blacks perceive themselves as being less accepted, having less discretion in their jobs, and facing race-related organizational barriers to their advancement (Greenhaus et al. 1990; Jones 1986). Women report their developmental opportunities are lower in visibility, scope, formal authority, and opportunity for informal support (Ohlott et al., 1994; Lyness & Thompson 1997).

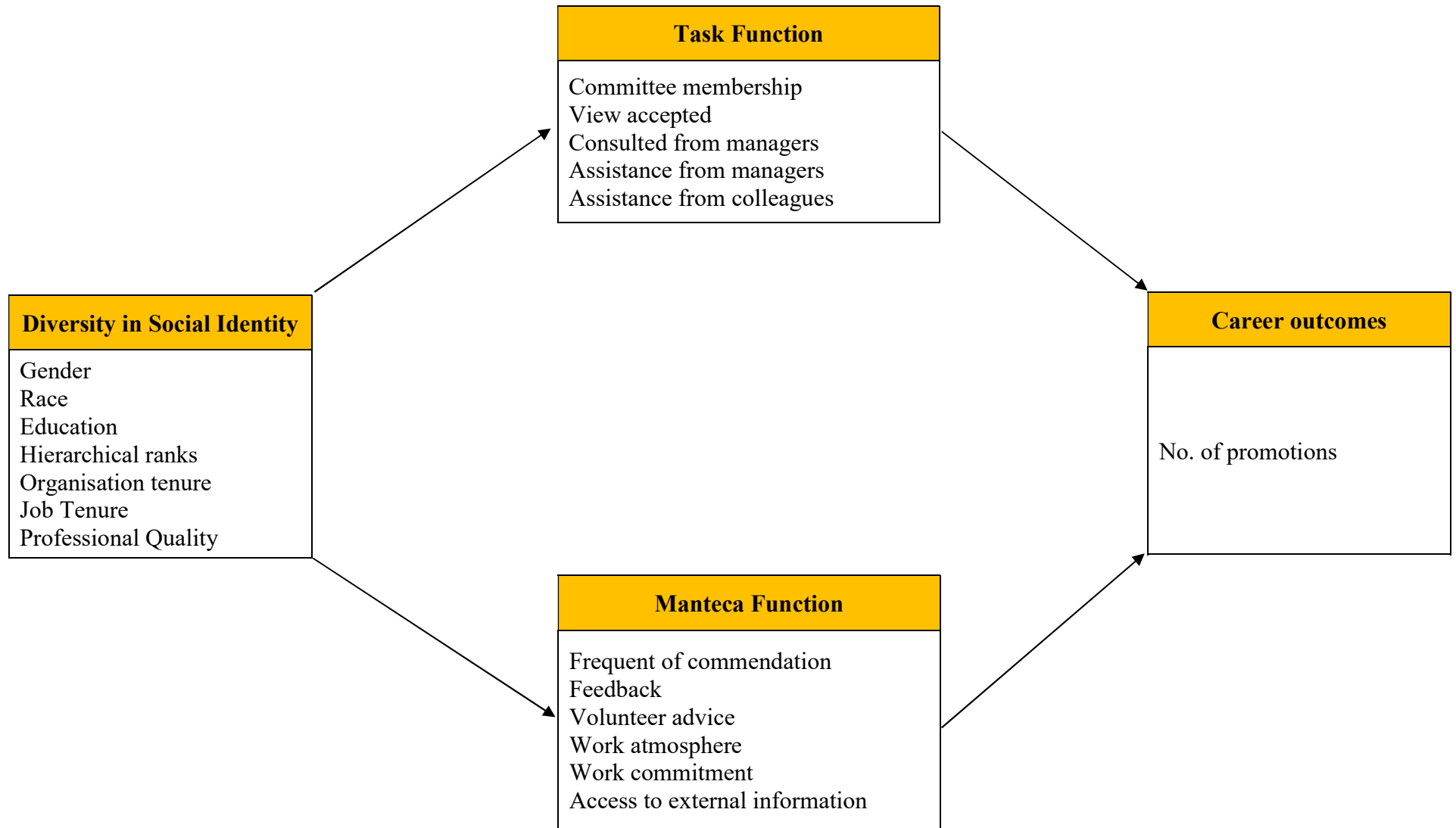


Minorities may find it difficult to attain top positions in organizations because they do not fit culturally in prescribed organizational prototypes.

**Hypotheses:**

- H1: White males have a better chance of inclusion in membership, involvement and consultation for decision-making than other minorities.
- H2: Perception of organizational support is expected to be higher for White men relative to other minorities.
- H3: Perception of work environment and commitment is expected to be more positive for White males relative to other minorities.

**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**



Gender Ethnic Diversity and Career Advancement in The Workplace - Page 5 of 21

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## METHOD

The research setting is a case study of a large United Kingdom-based organization. The company employs over 2,000 workers, with a male-female ratio of 3:1, minority ethnic groups (mainly blacks) constituting 20 percent of the total employees. The company has several overseas bases. The data was collected in one location in UK.

Data were collected from questionnaire, interviews and documentary. Because of the relatively sensitive issue, informants were assured of their anonymity. 105 questionnaires were collected. The response rate was 70%. Most of the respondents were male (71.4%). The sample represents all the age ranges, majority of them were between 40-46 (29%), followed by the 26-32 (20%). Two-thirds were Whites, 27.6% being Blacks; the rest was Asian, Chinese and others. Thus, the respondents were representative of the ethnic and gender mix within the focal organization as much as possible. Detailed demographic statistics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Males	75	71.4%
Age categories		
18-25	11	10.5%
26-32	20	19
33-39	18	17.1
40-46	29	27.6
Over 46	27	25.8
Ethnicity		
White	70	66.7
Black	29	27.6
Asian, Chinese & Other	6	5.7
Educational level		
High school	33	31.4%
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	25	23.8
Masters Degree	27	25.7
PhD or other Doctorate	20	19
Professional Qualifications (Yes)	32	30.5%
Position		
Clerk/Administration	18	17.1%
Operator/worker	36	34.3
Professional	41	39
Supervisor	9	8.6
Manager	1	1

Status differential can be inferred from position/hierarchical ranks in organization. The break down of hierarchical ranks and numbers of promotions by gender and racial makeup is presented in Table 2. It should be noted that there was no significant difference between males and females, as well

as among the different ethnic groups in hierarchical ranks (positions) but significant differences were found between males and females and ethnic groups in number of promotions, favoring males and Whites.

**Table 2 The Break Down of Hierarchical Ranks and Numbers of Promotions by Gender and Racial Makeup**

	Hierarchical Rank					No. of Promotions		
	Clerk/ Admin	Operator Worker	Professi onal	Supervisor	Manager	None	1-4 times	5-9 times
Gender								
Male	10	26	32	7	0	24	32	17
Female	8	10	9	2	1	19	6	1
Ethnicity								
White	12	29	21	8	0	14	35	18
Black	5	5	18	0	1	23	3	0
Asian / others	1	2	2	1	0	6	0	0

### Measures

Career outcome was measured by number of promotions. Organizational tenure was measured by years employed by the organization. Job tenure was measured by years employed in the current position. Gender was coded male (1) or female (2).

#### Task function includes

1. Number of committees or taskforce membership- ranging from none to 5 or more.
2. Views accepted at committee meetings- on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 being always, very often, often, seldom to 5 being never.
3. Consultation from managers on issues related to operations of the department- ranging from 1 being very often, often, seldom to 5 being never.
4. Assistance from managers/colleagues in the performance of work – ranging from 1 being extremely supportive, supportive, fairly supportive, to 4 being unsupportive.

#### Maintenance function includes

1. Frequency of commendation on work performance- ranging from 1 being very often to 4 being never.
2. Feedback from colleagues – ranging from positive, constructive criticism, a fair balance of negatives and positives, harsh but justifiable, negative
3. Volunteer advice to team leader – ranging from very often to never
4. Work atmosphere- ranging from 1 being very friendly, friendly, unfriendly to 4 being intolerable
5. Work commitment- work less hours, remain the same, work more hours
6. Access to external information- ranging from 1 being to a great extent, fair, limited and 4 being not at all.

### Data Analysis

In addition to group mean differences, correlation and regression analysis were used to test the hypothesized relationships between the independent variables and outcome measure. Demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, professional qualification, position, job and organization tenure were entered first as control variables. The task function variables and

maintenance variables were entered separately to examine the additional contribution in predicting the impact on number of promotions.

## RESULTS

The mean difference in key variables between gender and ethnic groups are listed in Table 3. The male respondents were older with longer organizational tenure. There were no significant difference in educational attainment, hierarchical rank (position), but female respondents were slightly better in professional qualifications. It should be noted that there were significant difference in educational attainment, professional qualifications and organizational tenure among the different ethnic groups. Whites were less educated with slightly better professional qualifications and longer organizational tenure. The number of promotions was significantly higher for males and Whites.

Table 3 Mean Difference between gender and Ethnic Groups

	Male	Female	t	White	Black	Asian	F	Scheffe
Age category	3.71	3.03	2.07*	3.67	3.21	3.17	1.11	
Education	4.88	5.30	-1.15	4.59	5.9	5.5	7.25***	B>W
Prof. qualification	1.64	1.83	-1.87+	1.77	1.54	1.50	3.27*	
Org. tenure	2.19	1.80	1.98*	2.24	1.79	1.50	3.94*	
Position	2.48	2.27	1.09	2.36	2.55	2.50	.49	
Job tenure	1.39	1.43	-.36	1.31	1.59	1.50	2.26	
No. of promotion	1.90	1.31	3.72***	2.06	1.12	1	28.27***	W>B,A
# promotion sought	2.63	2.77	-.73	2.61	2.83	2.67	.71	
Committee membership	1.83	0.9	2.98**	2.06	0.48	1.0	15.05***	W>B
View acceptance at meetings	2.89	3.67	-2.74	2.62	4.29	4.00	28.96***	W<B,A
Consultation from managers	3.08	3.79	-4.06***	2.9	4.0	4.0	29.83***	B<W,A
Volunteer advice	2.19	2.24	-.30	2.38	1.89	2.17	4.81**	B>W
Assistance from colleagues	2.44	3.53	-5.04***	2.26	3.76	3.67	33.70***	W<B,A
Assistance from managers	2.52	3.67	-5.30***	2.33	3.83	4.17	39.17***	W<B,A
Freq. of commendation	2.57	3.27	-3.89***	2.4	3.52	3.5	28.67***	W<B,A
Feedback from colleagues	3.29	2.97	.73	3.76	2.10	2.0	8.86***	W>B
Work atmosphere	2.25	3.13	-4.47***	2.06	3.41	3.33	17.71***	W<B,A
Work commitment	3.52	2.50	2.65**	3.83	1.86	2.83	15.15***	W>B
Access to external info.	1.87	1.27	3.57***	1.99	1.14	1	17.33***	W<B,A

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001



## Membership of Committees and Taskforces

Inclusion in committees and taskforces is one measure of how organization utilizes its workforce's diverse skills, knowledge and expertise. Significant difference existed between males and females in terms of membership in committees and taskforce. One-way analysis of variance also showed significant difference among the different racial groups. Females and minority groups were excluded from committee or taskforce assignments. If women are excluded to begin with, it is not a bias-free process. The literature states that most women resent being placed on so many taskforces or committees, merely to create a gender balance on them. The significant issue is level of inclusion- utilization of human resources. This is known as tokenism (Kanter 1977) and creates a real problem for implying that it is better for women to be on more committees, without examining the nature of the committees. If women were on the trivial task forces or committees, while men were on those that count, it makes a difference. Then the next question is their level of involvement in decision-making.

## Participation in Decision-making

While membership of committees and taskforces is just one step towards facilitating staff contribution to organizational functioning, it is important to explore to what extent participation in decision-making is bias-free, based on gender, race and ethnicity. There was no significant difference between males and females in the response to views being accepted at committee and taskforce meetings. But significant differences were found among the different ethnic groups. Whites were more likely have their views accepted at committees and taskforce meetings. 10% of Whites stated that they 'always' had their views accepted at committee and taskforce meetings, no Asians or Blacks 'always' had their views accepted at these types of meetings. While no White ever had his or her views rejected at these meetings, those of 41.2% blacks were rejected. Females were three times more likely to have their views rejected at departmental meetings than their male counterparts. Again, 97.1% of the White often had their views accepted at these types of meetings. The differences are statistically significant ( $p < .002$ ). Given that there is no statistical difference in position, it clearly rules out that their position rather than their "whiteness" could be an alternative explanation for their decisions being accepted. Team meetings are held when necessary. There is significant difference between the degree to which members' views were accepted at team meetings along the lines of gender, and ethnicity. Blacks were three times more likely to have their views rejected at team meetings than their White counterparts.

## Consultation for Decision-making by Managers

Research results showed significant differences in both gender and ethnic groups in consultation for decision-making by managers. Managers consulted a significant greater number of male (95%) than female. With regards to ethnic groups, managers only consulted Whites. Whites are the most represented ethnic group in the organization that means they are most likely to be found than other ethnic counterparts. However, this is unlikely to be a satisfactory explanation to a total neglect of other groups. Most of the respondents volunteer information to the heads of department, however, managers seldom accept the views from minority groups. Statistical analysis revealed that there was no difference between males and females in providing information voluntarily. In fact, Blacks were more likely to volunteer than Whites and Asian.

## Support from Managers and Colleagues

The data collected showed significant differences in support from managers and colleagues as a function of gender and ethnic groups. Twenty percent of male but no female described their colleagues as extremely supportive. 63.3% female and over 75% of the minority groups largely viewed their colleagues as unsupportive. Similar patterns were found in support from managers. In terms of frequency of commendation they deserved from their boss, there were significant

difference in both gender and ethnic groups. In response to the question “How often does your manager commend you on your work performance, when you think you deserve it?” 10% Whites, 50% Asians, 48.3% Blacks and 50% Chinese and other minority ethnic groups had never been commended. How do respondents interpret feedback? There was no difference between males and females in receiving feedback from their colleagues about their work. Significant difference exists among different ethnic groups. Whites received more positive feedback than other ethnic groups. A quarter of Asians and half of the Chinese and other minority groups felt that the feedback they received from their colleagues was “harsh but justifiable”.

### **Perception of their Work Environment and Commitment**

Significant difference existed in work atmosphere and commitment in both gender and ethnic groups. Males and Whites described the atmosphere within their organization more friendly. Majority of the Whites (75%) and none of the minority groups described the work atmosphere as very friendly and friendly. The minority groups viewed the work environment as unfriendly or intolerable. As for gender, males found the work environment friendlier than females. There were also significant difference in work commitment in both gender and ethnic groups. The minority groups would like to work less hours and elsewhere, compared with 24% Whites. 24% Whites indicated that they would prefer to have the situation remain the same.

### **Number of Times Successful in Promotion**

Career success was measured by number of times the respondents successfully granted for promotion. There was a disparity, in favor of males and Whites, between number of promotions sought and number of times the respondents had been successful in promotion. Females were more than twice as likely to be unsuccessful in their application for promotion as their male counterparts. No Asian or Chinese and other minority ethnic groups have ever been promoted. This will be further investigated by regression analysis when demographic variables, such as educational attainment, professional qualification, job and organizational tenure were entered as predictors.

The correlations among variables are given in Table 4. Overall there were high correlations among the variables, except position, education, and professional qualification. Demographic variables, except position and professional qualification, were highly correlated with number of promotions. All task function variables and all maintenance variables, except volunteer advice to team leaders, were significantly correlated with promotion.

Table 4 Correlations among Variables

	Age Range	Sex	Race	EDU	ProfQ	Org. Tenure	Job Tenure	Post	No. Promo	No.Com Member	View Accept ed	Consulte d from Manager	Assist from Colleg	Assist from Mgers	Freq Commend	Feedbk Advice	Volunt eer Advice	Work Atmos	Work Attitude
Sex	-.199*																		
Race	-.138	.330**																	
EDU	-.085	.138	.313**																
ProfQ	.132	-.182 <sup>+</sup>	.235**	.309**															
Org. Tenure	.643***	-.191*	-.266**	-.208*	-.010														
Job Tenure	.235*	.035	.178 <sup>+</sup>	.132	.188 <sup>+</sup>	.330***													
Position	.141	-.107	.086	.525***	.363***	-.097	.096												
No. Promo	.377***	-.353***	-.577***	-.271**	-.057	.484***	-.307**	.041											
Committe Membership	.31***	-.282**	-.411***	.052	.008	.285**	-.19 <sup>+</sup>	.25**	.661***										
View	-.081	.296**	.584***	.098	.001	-.147	.263*	-.089	-.638***	-.646***									
Acceptance Consultation from Manager	-.126	.390***	.583***	.112	.070	-.240*	.356***	-.092	-.711***	-.699***	.720***								
Assistance Colleagues	-.234*	.445***	.580***	.190 <sup>+</sup>	.025	-.263**	.279**	-.039	-.663***	-.539**	.622***	.691***							
Assistance Managers	-.272**	.463***	.634***	.171 <sup>+</sup>	.023	-.296**	.277**	-.031	-.739***	-.601***	.641***	.740***	.850***						
Freq of Commend	-.162	.358***	.557***	.272**	.136	-.205*	.267**	.109	-.704***	-.523***	.659***	.595***	.706***	.703***					
Feedback	.098	-.072	-.362***	.045	.081	.099	-.120	.022	.448***	-.517***	-.439***	-.475***	-.439***	-.489***	-.495***				
Volunteer Advice	-.190 <sup>+</sup>	.033	-.250*	-.302**	-.192	-.169	-.213 <sup>+</sup>	-.355***	.055	.063	.037	-.038	-.049	-.088	-.25*4	.061			
Work Atmosphere	-.255**	.403***	.590***	.184 <sup>+</sup>	-.042	-.233*	.321***	-.098	-.648***	-.525	.640***	.671***	.861***	.785***	.607***	-.422***	-.048		
Work attitudes	.043	-.252**	-.390***	-.290**	-.122	.058	-.338***	-.116	.560***	.465**	-.501***	-.521***	-.554***	-.584***	-.575***	.443***	.382***	-.518***	
Access to Ext. Inform	.126	-.331**	-.481***	-.327***	-.088	.069	-.063	-.124	.246*	.133	-.272*	-.081	-.272**	-.300**	-.310***	.241*	.244*	-.340***	.244*

<sup>+</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The regression results are provided in Table 5. When the demographic variables were entered in the equation, ethnicity, position, job and organizational tenure were significant predictors of number of promotions as indicated in the first regression model. Gender had a marginal effect on successful promotion. Education and qualification were not significant. In terms of task function, committee membership, consulted by managers and support from colleague and managers did not have any effect on successful promotion. Only views acceptance at meetings had significant impact on promotion.

In terms of maintain function, frequency of commendation deserved and work commitment were significant predictors of number of promotions as indicated in model 2. Volunteer advice to team leader had only marginal effect. Feedback from managers, work atmosphere and access to external information have no significant effect on promotion.

Model 2	Dependable Variable: Number of promotions	
	Beta	
Gender	-.004	.015
Ethnicity	-.35***	-.162 <sup>+</sup>
Education	.106	-.074
Prof. qualification	.008	.048
Position	.362***	.296***
Job tenure	-.548***	-.414***
Organ. tenure	.464***	.428***
Freq. of commendation		-.33***
Feedback from managers		.076
Volunteer advice		-.122 <sup>+</sup>
Work atmosphere		.072
Work commitment		.237**
Access to external info.		.037
R <sup>2</sup>	.653	.802
Δ R <sup>2</sup>	.659 ***	.149***
F	18.82***	19.91***

<sup>+</sup> P<.1, \*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001



Table 5 Regression Results

Model 1	Dependable Variable: Number of promotions	
	Beta	
Gender	-.134 <sup>+</sup>	-.07
Ethnicity	-.29**	-.034
Education	.099	-.115
Prof. qualification	.08	-.008
Position	.219*	.194*
Job tenure	-.544**	-.412***
Organ. tenure	.494***	.446***
Committee membership		.068
View acceptance at meetings		-.236*
Consultation from managers		.030
Assistance from managers		-.238
Assistance from colleagues		.014
	R <sup>2</sup>	.662
	$\Delta R^2$	.662***
	F	17.06***
		.736
		.074*
		12.99**

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study examines gender and ethnic groups difference in the perception of work group relationship to promotion in the workplace. It provides a deeper understanding of the overt or covert discrimination or differential treatment of gender and ethnic minorities in organizations.

This study utilizes social identity theory as a framework to understand how structural variables and organizational demography influence their workplace relationship. Gender and ethnic group membership are important in understanding employees' perceptions of and reaction to their organization's equal opportunities effort. There are group differences in their perceived support for organization's fair treatment, career advancement and the attitudinal consequences of such perceptions.

Our findings reveal significant gender and racial/ethnic differences in employees' perception of their organization's effort to equal opportunities and support. Persistent differences in diversity perceptions between gender and racial/ethnic groups in the organization were consistent and highly significant in number of promotions, commendations deserved, consultation, support from colleagues and managers, access to external information, work atmosphere and attitude. The present study did not find any significant differences in views being accepted, volunteer in providing advice, and feedback from colleagues between males and females. The perceptual difference is more substantial among ethnic groups than gender groups.

Important differences between gender and ethnic groups in their reaction to perceptions of support for equal opportunities within their organization were observed. Being different, it is hard for them to accept views from out-group members. Ethnic minorities do not feel valued and respected. They are not only excluded from committee membership, participation in decisions, but also not receiving honest feedback nor getting the kind of support they deserved. Some inherent unfairness of practices gives preferences to certain employees on the basis of their gender and ethnicity. More subtle discrimination (racism or sexism) still exists due to the lack of fit with relevant social identity subculture. Females and minorities have experienced organizational discrimination. They are particularly sensitive to being treated unfairly.

Existing organizational power structures and resource allocation still largely favor senior white males over all other groups. Males prefer to remain the same, while racial/ethnic minorities and women hold less favorable perceptions of the organization's treatment of diversity. Women may feel that work organizations create or tolerate barriers that prevent them from getting a promotion or from feeling included in the organizational information, resource, or power networks.

Despite much effort was put in to promote equal opportunity and diversity, results from the present study clearly showed a lack of an atmosphere that is conducive to the fostering of an effective work relationship. Minority groups were denied the opportunity to become members of committees, together with low level of inclusion in the decision-making process. The denial of participation came in the rejection of their views in meetings. Seniors and managers largely omitted them from their consultation process, and their volunteer to provide information was rejected frequently. With little positive comments and minimal support they received from their managers and colleagues, women and minority groups were worst off in their career advancement. Consequently, the organization is deprived of the contribution that its diverse workforce can make to its effectiveness.

It is an interesting contrast to note that there is no difference in number of promotions sought (times applied for promotion) between males and females and among different ethnic groups, but there is significant difference in number of times successful in promotion in both gender and ethnic groups. Many from the minority groups expressed their disappointment with the internal promotion system. They considered it a waste of time and believed it would never reflect their sense of entitlement to high pay and advancement opportunities.

The present study contributes to the current literature with interesting finding that educational attainment, professional qualifications and hierarchical position were not significant factors for predicting promotion. Because men has longer tenure and tenure was significantly related to number of promotions. It provides an alternative explanation for why men might have promoted more often. The more successful persons are ambitious or involved with their careers and devote more time to their jobs, desired to work more hours. Minority group's attitudes were more negative. The more negative work attitude reported by minority might be interpreted as a reflection of their frustration and dissatisfaction. Individuals' work attitudes determine whether effort to increase workplace diversity lead to increase work atmosphere, group cohesiveness and organizational effectiveness. Otherwise it will foster feelings of resentment and increase conflict.

The results offer important theoretical and practical implications for understanding and managing the impact of equal opportunities on human capital. The results provide significant implications for organization in retaining management talent and to achieve equality in employment. Managers in the company need to recognize that there are problems in the way people are treated in the organization. This study has special implications for effective utilization of diverse workforce- removing barriers, keeping women and minorities from moving up the organizational hierarchy and facilitating more productive work relationship. A new frame of reference should be adopted in suppressing prejudicial attitudes and eliminating discrimination to ensure justice and fair treatment of all members with equal opportunities in promotion.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

The present study is based on findings from a single organization. Generalizability of the findings to other organizations should be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, the results are likely to be at least indicative of gender and ethnic group participation in a particular type of organization. Future study should examine the generalizability of the findings across multiple organizations in different industries with large sample sizes and multi-method data collection. Furthermore, this is not a longitudinal study. It is difficult to tell whether the plight of women and minorities have improved, not changed, or deteriorated over time. One important point is even with the passing of the law addressing sexual, racial and ethnic discrimination two to three decades ago; their treatment in the workplace is still far from being equal. Longitudinal study to track down the changes is highly recommended in future study.

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### **Prof. Crawford's Qualifications and Affiliations**

Professor Dr. Crawford is a Director of HRODC Ltd. and Director of HRODC Postgraduate Training Institute.

He is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), from University of London; holding:

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  - ◆ Gender & Diversity in Organizations; and
  - ◆ Critical Management Studies.

- Member of the Asian Academy of Management (MAAM);
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