Women and Minority Expatriates

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Introduction

Diversity in the workplace is defined as "the distribution of personal attributes among interdependent members of a work unit" (Jackson *et al*., 2003, p.802). The empirical diversity literature has focused primarily on studies of "readily-detected relations-oriented diversity (sex, racio-ethnicity, and age)" (*op.cit*., p.805). It has also focused strongly on the business case argument for diversity. For example, Kochan *et al*. (2003, p.5) cite Lew Platt, former CEO of Hewlett Packard, who highlights that talent shortages mean that businesses must "seek out and use the full capabilities of all our employees"; in addition, Platt reports that diversity enables organizations' workforces to "be like our customers, including the need to understand and communicate with them in terms that reflects their concerns", and finally that "diverse teams produce better results".

Achievement of positive outcomes through diverse teams, however, is not an easy matter. This is because diversity outcomes such as performance and satisfaction are dependent on processes (such as communication and co-ordination) as well as context (Jackson *et al*., 2003; Özbilgin *et al*., 2015). Thus, Kochan *et al*. (2003) suggest a lack of evidence that directly links workforce diversity with business performance; they suggest that any such relationship is complex – for example, HR practices that lead to greater team diversity may be undermined by disruptive conflict and turnover if organizations are unskilled in managing diversity. Hence, it is argued that structures that embed accountability (Kalev *et al*., 2006) reinforced by top level support (Özbilgin *et al*., 2007; Shen *et al*., 2009) are needed for diversity processes to be enacted successfully.

Turning to the international context, organizations also typically wish to improve diversity in their expatriate populations as this presents a strong business case (Shortland and Perkins, 2020). However, integrating diversity approaches into a spectrum of human resource policies, as well as the structure and culture of subsidiary organizations, is hindered by actions resting largely on untested and potentially stereotypical assumptions (Wise and Tschirhart, 2000). And, given the “slipperiness of the concept”, subsidiaries may use the diversity rhetoric to introduce local concepts rather than the headquarters’ “corporate definition” (Ferner *et al*., 2005, p.315).

A further problem concerns the realization of just how little we know about the participation of minorities within expatriate workforces, what hinders their international deployment, and so what organizations might do to increase international assignment diversity. Practitioner survey data reveal that women’s participation as international assignees has increased from just 3% in the 1980s (Adler, 1984a) to 32% in 2020 (Santa Fe, 2020). From this we can see that women’s representation as expatriates still lags well behind that of men. We also know from practitioner surveys that, for many years, around 70% of the expatriates deployed have been in the 30-49 year age range (BGRS, 2016a; Cartus, 2010). Although increasing proportions of younger (20-29) assignees are being recorded more recently in firms which see global mobility as a strategic talent driver, the majority of organizationally-assigned expatriate assignments appear outside of the reach of the younger and older (60+) generations (BGRS, 2016b). No comprehensive expatriate participation data addressing race and ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, and disability are available and thus we know virtually nothing about the representation of other minorities within organizations’ expatriate workforces.

Notwithstanding these potential challenges, the business case for expatriate diversity is a key objective for employers; as the relocation management company Santa Fe (2020, p.52) notes "business leaders are prioritising the value of diversity". Organizationally-assigned expatriation can lead to career benefits for those undertaking it (Ramaswami *et al.*, 2016) so increasing expatriate diversity is also clearly a concern for those who may be precluded from this experience. Although employers have promoted some aspects of diversity (most notably gender) as a means of reducing skills shortages in expatriation from the mid-1990s (Adler, 1994a, 1994b; Davison and Punnett, 1995), detailed studies of organizations' efforts to increase other diversity characteristics within their workforces in an international context remain scarce and so still require rigorous academic study.

To date, the main focus of the somewhat limited expatriate diversity literature has addressed the influence of international assignees' diversity characteristics on their adjustment and the extent of local support given to them in this regard. While adjustment and local support do help to deliver positive expatriate outcomes (Freeman and Lindsay, 2012) - and hence are of interest to organizations deploying expatriates - the role that diversity plays in generating competitive advantage has yet to be studied systematically in an expatriate context beyond the well-established focus on gender (Altman and Shortland, 2008). This suggests gaps where further research will be of immense value.

The aim of this chapter is thus to review critically what we know from the academic literature on expatriate diversity and to provide directions for future research. The following sections provide an outline summary of the expatriate diversity literature relating to gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, age, sexual orientation, and disability. For each of these we begin by setting the scene briefly within the broad context of more mainstream diversity literature and end with directions for future research that flow from what we do not know from the published expatriate diversity literature highlighted. The chapter concludes with a discussion drawing upon the potential contribution of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Researchers are encouraged to pay attention not only to diversity among the expatriate workforce but also the diversity of institutional contexts when seeking to interpret influences on the selection and appraisal of expatriates and the criteria against which their potential and success or failure will be judged, in which demographic features may be subject to 'isomorphism' – a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Hawley, 1968).

Gender

Gender discrimination is a widely researched area. Over the past several decades, women have made significant inroads into the labor market, entering and succeeding in previously male-dominated occupations and professions (Bolton and Muzio, 2008; Reskin and Roos, 1990). However, women remain disadvantaged in a number of ways, including in pay and career progression; these are manifested as the gender pay gap (women earn less than men) (Blau and Khan, 2007) and the glass ceiling (women face invisible but persistent barriers preventing their access to higher levels within organizational hierarchies) (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005).

Women's position in the labor market reflects segregation: horizontal (women are employed in different sectors and jobs from men); and vertical (women are concentrated lower down the organizational hierarchy). Horizontal segregation does not necessarily imply inequality if all sectors and occupational roles are perceived as equal (Siltanen *et al*., 1995). However, society places different values on jobs and sectors and it is these relative values that determine the pay, prestige and status accorded to them. Traditional female occupations attract low status and low pay and, as male occupations feminize, re-segregation occurs (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

Sex role theory suggests that through socialization men and women are conditioned into behavioral roles (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Although sex role stereotyping influences the typical characteristics of male and female occupations, it should be of less relevance in qualifying or disqualifying women's entry to them (Anker, 2001). At the individual level, once having held a gender atypical job, men and women are perceived as more suited to holding future atypical sex roles. This suggests that career history can help to reduce gender bias for women (Hareli *et al.*, 2008).

Vertical segregation is influenced by horizontal segregation – the smaller the percentage of women in a profession, the lower their chances of reaching the top (Wirth, 2001). Vertical segregation is compounded by women's propensity to work part-time. Although this can aid women's labor market entry and exit, it acts as a trap (Bollé, 2001), reduces pay and career prospects (Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010), decreases access to management (Markey *et al.*, 2002), and inhibits desegregation (Horrell and Rubery, 1991).

Women's representation in the managerial pool is growing, assisted by legislation and a changing social climate (Altman *et al.*, 2005). Young women managers began to outpace their male counterparts' career progression some while back and so it is suggested that the 'glass ceiling' may become 'time bounded' (Simpson and Altman, 2000) as women's exclusion from senior positions declines (Moore and Vianello, 2000). Notwithstanding this, women face greater demands than men in proving themselves, having to out-perform them to get to senior levels (Burke, 2005).

It is also reported that the glass ceiling is retrenching to the top of organizational hierarchies (Altman *et al.*, 2005). Top leadership positions require long hours of work and demanding geographical mobility (Woodward and Lyon, 2000). Strategies to cope with the demands of elite careers can involve living alone and forgoing partners and children (Esseveld and Andersson, 2000; Vianello and Moore, 2000) – but this is a very heavy price to pay for breaking down vertical segregation. Where women are accessing the most senior organizational positions, here lies another potentially problematic issue: the "glass cliff".

Ryan and Haslam (2007) report women are more likely to be taken on when senior roles are particularly precarious, being appointed into board positions within firms that are underperforming and in financial difficulty. This suggests a gendered process in the allocation of the senior organizational positions to women.

Research into women's expatriation began following Adler's (1979) paper with its call to learn why women were so sparsely represented as expatriates. Over the past four decades research has investigated a range of issues that potentially might help to explain women's low international assignment participation. These have included: women's (dis)interest in undertaking international assignments; societal cultural values, prejudice and stereotyping in relation to their international deployment and local acceptance; organizational (dis)interest and bias in expatriating women; and lack of support mechanisms to assist in women's expatriation (Hutchings and Michailova, 2017).

There has been considerable research across the decades into women's interest and willingness to relocate internationally – with mixed findings. Many studies show women appearing as keen/receptive as men to undertaking an international career (see for example, Adler, 1984b; Stroh *et al*., 2000; Wang and Bu, 2004) or even more so (Hill and Tillery, 1992); in others men are reported as more willing to accept an international assignment than women (van der Velde *et al*., 2005). Even when women are interested in expatriation, this does not always translate into assignment acceptance. This has been attributed in part to a number of family-related factors including, for example, dual career concerns/loss of second incomes (Harvey *et al*., 2009), the unwillingness of the partner to go on assignment (Konopaske *et al*., 2005), family power (men's earning potential being greater than women's) (Harvey, 1998), and concern over children's adjustment and education (Dupuis *et al*., 2008; Hutchings *et al*., 2010; Tzeng, 2006; Zhu *et al*., 2006).

Once on assignment, the literature has demonstrated that women are successful in undertaking expatriate roles – this being the case in a wide range of societal cultures and contexts (see for instance, Adler, 1987; Cole and McNulty, 2011; Harrison and Michailova, 2012; Taylor and Napier, 2001). Indeed, women expatriates have been reported as more successful than men (Dallalfar and Movahedi, 1996; Napier and Taylor, 2002; Tung, 2004) and preferred as co-workers by local nationals (Varma *et al*., 2006). This suggests that organizations should be interested in facilitating female expatriation as it presents a strong business case.

It is important to note that the literature has primarily studied the expatriation of Western female expatriates and their assignment outcomes, having paid only limited attention to the effects of their ethnicity. For example, Japanese-American women were found to experience greater adjustment difficulties in Japan than those of other ethnicities working there (Taylor and Napier, 1996); women of Japanese descent expatriated to Japan experienced greater initial resistance than their Caucasian counterparts as did female expatriates of Chinese descent working in China (Napier and Taylor, 2002). Female expatriates working in Western multinational firms in Taiwan who more closely resembled the ethnicity of locals were treated to a greater extent like local women and, as a result, faced greater gender discrimination particularly from men of the same ethnic background; Western women, in contrast, were seen as emissaries of their sending corporations (Tzeng, 2006), reflecting Adler's (1987) earlier findings of the positive reception received by Western expatriate women working in Asian countries. Research on female expatriates/repatriates in South Africa reported that Caucasian women did not experience gender or racial discrimination whereas black women experienced both (Mathur-Helm, 2002). These data indicate that when female expatriates resemble local nationals, they are treated similarly, being subjected to local gender prejudice.

Research suggests that women face greater barriers throughout the expatriate cycle than do men – in selection, while on assignment and upon repatriation (Mayrhofer and Scullion, 2002). For example, Harris (2002) notes that closed and opaque selection processes (where individuals are identified by others known to them and informal conversations form the basis of selection) favor men's expatriate deployment; women are more likely to be selected when the process is open and transparent (where positions are advertised and formal selection processes take place). Vance and Paik (2001) report selection bias demonstrated by US managers selecting female expatriates with reasons given for this including: fears over cultural restrictions limiting women's actions; men's predominance in - and aggressive - business dealings; men being better qualified; and women's inability to meet assignment challenges and achieve successful adjustment. This indicates the home country 'backyard effect' as being a major obstacle to expatriate gender diversity. If women are successful as expatriates, then host country prejudice is not the cultural barrier it is presumed to be; the problem more likely lies in home country managers' cultural perceptions of women's treatment and adjustment in the host location.

The literature reports that women expatriates can benefit from in-country support (such as mentors and networks) aiding their willingness to take up assignments and assisting with their career progression once they have done so (Hutchings and Michailova, 2017). However, women assignees consider support received as insufficient (for example, Linehan *et al*., 2001; Linehan and Scullion, 2008); they also report less perceived organizational support than men (Hutchings *et al*., 2008). This is potentially disadvantageous to increasing expatriate gender diversity because women's willingness to relocate may increase when they perceive adequate employer support (Salamin and Davoine, 2015).

Summary and implications for further research

The literature has examined women's expatriation for some 40 years. From this we know that women are interested in international careers, they are successful in them, and yet their selection is subject to a 'backyard effect' whereby selectors make stereotypical assumptions that women are less likely to be accepted by local people (Vance and Paik, 2001). Organizational support appears to be insufficient in assisting women to access and undertake international assignments. In terms of academic research conducted, our understanding of expatriate gender diversity remains patchy as we lack, for the most part, demographic and geographic data. As Shortland and Altman (2011) explain, we have little consistency across the various studies published that can give us a clear picture of women expatriates' job roles, grades, age, family status, career stage, organizational background, nationality, ethnicity, and home/host countries of operation. Further research should therefore ensure full demographic and geographic profiles as far as possible in-keeping with protocols for participant anonymity.

Academic literature has historically focused in the main on cross-sectional studies of Western women expatriates from developed countries (Shortland and Altman, 2011); going forward, further research on non-Western female expatriates of different ethnicities and those relocating from newly industrializing nations would widen our understanding of the issues that women face in being selected and in progressing their international careers. Further research is also needed within organizations to investigate the impact of employer support for female expatriation over time. To achieve such a detailed understanding, access to employers - not just female assignees - is required and longitudinal research is needed to assess the success or otherwise of any employer interventions instituted.

Race and ethnicity

Visual racial characteristics reflect inherited traits and include skin color, facial or cranial features and hair texture. Ethnicity is an important human characteristic through which individuals identify themselves and can be categorized into groups; ethnic identity includes common cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics (Lauring and Guttormsen, 2010).

Racial, ethnic and cultural diversity is considered as a key organizational strength. Yet, it is argued that racial and ethnic groups define diversity differently. In their research, Unzueta and Binning (2010) find that whites associated diversity with the presence of blacks, Latinos and Asians although which of these groups are represented has little relevance to their perceptions of a diverse workforce. However, for the minority groups themselves, diversity is achieved when their own particular group is well represented. The authors also find that the representation of white workers is not generally associated with the concept of diversity. These findings are important because, as the authors explain, if one minority group does not associate other minorities with diversity, they might not feel they are working in a diverse organization because their own group is not represented even if there are many other minority racial/ethnic groups in the workforce.

From their analysis of several studies of minority ethnic and majority white workers, Unzueta and Binning (2012) suggest that minority and majority group members have opposing interests in their perceptions of diversity. They highlight that diversity is defined differently by these groups: diversity is perceived as increasing opportunities for minorities while decreasing them for the majority group. When considering numerical and hierarchical representation, the authors note that members of the minority group may define diversity to encompass high representation on both of these dimensions while the majority group may define diversity more broadly with high representation on either (or both) dimension. Further research by Unzueta *et al*. (2012, p.304) in the context of race indicates that people use the concept "to legitimize their attitudes towards inequality": anti-egalitarian individuals perceive that high levels of occupational heterogeneity contribute to racial diversity and so no further organizational action to promulgate diversity is required; egalitarian individuals however see low levels of occupational heterogeneity indicating insufficient racial diversity, supporting their call for affirmative action. The authors highlight the importance of their findings as differences in people's social motivations will affect the rationale for strengthening or weakening actions taken in respect of addressing racial diversity within organizations. Kumra and Manfredi (2012, p.109) note that prejudiced individuals will attribute negative behaviors carried out by one member of the racial or ethnic minority group to the group as a whole, while attributing positive behaviors to the minority person alone, according the individual a 'special' status. In this way the in-group majority can "retain their negative assessments of the out-group minority, despite evidence to the contrary", and thereby perpetuate negative racial and ethnic stereotyping.

While in the mainstream diversity literature race and ethnicity are frequently combined, in expatriate research studies the focus tends to be on nationality. This is problematic for those interested in understanding the expatriate diversity profile as "race and ethnicity capture important elements of demographic difference beyond national origin" (Olsen and Martins, 2009, p.318). Perceived demographic similarities can result in different nationalities feeling that they have shared values underpinning group identification and inclusion (Varma *et al*., 2011). For example, in Fisher and Härtel's (2003) study of how Thai and Western managers conceptualize intercultural effectiveness, Western expatriates' nationality is considered unimportant by both Western and Thai managers, but both racial background and ethnicity are considered by the Thais to have a significant effect on expatriates' predicted success. In Syed *et al*.'s (2014) study local Jordanian employees are indifferent to expatriate managers' nationality, as long as they demonstrate capability in driving the business forward and adapt to the local culture and business environment. This raises issues in relation to host country nationals' (HCN) perceptions and observations of expatriates' competence.

Racial hierarchies are in evidence in multi-ethnic societies: implicit perceptions of racial ordering lead to inequality whereby different racio-ethnic groups experience differential treatment – in-groups experience prestige effects and out-groups are treated negatively (Song, 2004). Thus, the racio-ethnic profile of the expatriate population might be expected to influence factors such as the support that individuals receive from HCNs, with the most prestigious groups in the racial hierarchy receiving the greatest support (Olsen and Martins, 2009). For example, Carr *et al*. (1996) cite studies in developing countries that show negative stereotypes applied to individuals from other developing nations in contrast to positive views of the competencies associated with Westerners: in Nigeria and Malawi, Western expatriates are favored over those from other African nations and white Western expatriates are favored over black Westerners from the same sending countries. Fechter and Walsh (2010) explain that it is the attribution of professional capacities according to race and ethnicity that results in white expatriates being regarded as experts and hence given the most senior positions and highest levels of remuneration, while non-whites are placed in lower, limited responsibility roles and receive less pay.

HCNs' previous experience of working with individuals from particular countries can generate stereotypes of the potential effectiveness of expatriates undertaking roles with which they are not usually associated. For example, in Fisher and Härtel's (2003) study in Thailand, skilled Burmese, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani managers experience difficulties because their Thai hosts' experience is that these nationalities typically undertake unskilled work; Thai managers also perceive African-Americans as potentially ineffective as previous encounters with this group were limited to military personnel of low education. Lauring's (2007) study of Danish expatriates working in Saudi Arabia records an ethnically segregated hierarchy: managers are European, supervisors are Egyptian, technical positions are held by Philippine employees and low-ranked Indians hold production roles. Where racial hierarchies are the norm, organizational effort to widen racial and ethnic expatriate diversity faces considerable challenges.

HCN co-worker support assists expatriate adjustment. When expatriates are from a racially distinct and culturally distant country, they are likely to be identified as foreigners and placed within a difficult to exit out-group (Toh and DeNisi, 2003). This can hinder benefitting from HCN support even if the expatriates' position in the racial hierarchy places them in a prestige group (Olsen and Martins, 2009). If expatriates are of similar racial origin to their hosts but lack ethnic similarity, they may also be categorized by HCNs as out-group foreigners, again resulting in limited support being given to them. Even when expatriates are of a similar racial profile and share similar ethnic characteristics to their hosts (for example, through language and cultural proficiency) and would be expected to be part of the in-group receiving HCN support, they may still find local acceptance hard to achieve (Zhang *et al*., 2018) and experience increased social competition (Olsen and Martins, 2009). For example, research in Japan and China indicates that expatriates of Japanese and Chinese ethnicity, proficient in the local language and culture of their posting, are not accepted as in-group members by HCNs due to factors such as the temporary nature of the assignment influencing social interactions, adjustment problems and conflicting host country identities (Peltokorpi and Zhang, 2020).

The formation of social groups is often based on salient racio-ethnic attributes with which individuals can identify themselves; hence, expatriates may adjust more easily to interacting with others of a similar ethnic group to their own rather than the host country's ethnic group(s) which requires them to hold competencies such as flexibility, tolerance, patience, and empathy to deal with linguistic and cultural obstacles (Pires *et al*., 2006). Expatriates working in multi-racial and multi-ethnic countries can require additional support due to the increased burdens that they face in adjusting to such diverse environments

(Freeman and Lindsay, 2012). If expatriates perceive ethnic differences as being too large or insurmountable, they are likely to seek out those whom they perceive as similar to themselves, resulting in expatriate enclaves (Adams and Van de Vijver, 2015), thereby negating organizations' efforts to benefit from racial and ethnic expatriate diversity within an integrated workplace environment.

Summary and implications for further research

The expatriate diversity literature indicates that ethnic minorities may be stereotyped negatively according to presumed lower competencies (Fechter and Walsh, 2010) and subjected to racial hierarchies (Song, 2004). It also indicates that ethnicity affects expatriates' experiences (Benson and Pattie, 2008). For example, expatriates rely on support received from locals and their own ability to build social support groups with other expatriates in order to adjust successfully. As globalization increases and the deployment of third-country nationals becomes more prominent, so a wider range of racial and ethnic expatriate diversity is expected (Olsen and Martins, 2009). This can increase the difficulties associated with adjustment (Freeman and Lindsay, 2012). Understanding the interaction effects of racio-ethnic diversity of the expatriates themselves and of their hosts on likely assignment outcomes will therefore clearly be of increasing importance to employers when considering organizational support.

Our understanding of the effects of race and ethnicity in an expatriate context are currently limited. An individual's racio-ethnic demographic characteristics are visible but their nationality is less so (Olsen and Martins, 2009). Going forward it is imperative that relevant data relating to race and ethnicity are collected - rather than pursuing a focus on nationality - if we are to make any progress in widening both our understanding of racio-ethnic expatriate diversity as well as the representation and successful outcomes of black and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals in international assignments.

With the current prominence of Black Lives Matter, there will also be increasing interest in organizational actions to tackle any detrimental ‘outsider status’ and hierarchical stereotyping accorded to BAME employees not only in their expatriate host countries but also in their home countries and/or where their employers are headquartered. The potential for the ‘backyard effect’ (Vance and Paik, 2001) currently researched within female expatriation requires consideration as part of a wider potential problem of bias and discrimination in home/HQ country expatriate selection and deployment practices extending to BAME employees.

Religion and belief

Protection from discrimination on grounds of religion and belief has been the subject of conventions and legal acts for many years. For example, ‘religion’ is included in the ILO (1958) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention; and ‘freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ is enshrined in the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. In the USA, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited religious discrimination in employment, being amended in 1972 to incorporate accommodation of religious practices (providing these do not cause undue hardship to the employer) (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

Protection from religious discrimination is justified through the discourse of human rights, drawing upon the principles of dignity, equality and autonomy: respect for innate humanity; equality of human worth; and the exercise of control over one’s life. Notwithstanding this, defining religion is fraught with difficulty and so most human rights documents protecting religious freedom avoid giving specific definitions; defining belief and determining which beliefs should be accorded protection from discrimination is also a contested area reflected, for example, in the scope of the European Court of Human Rights case law (Vickers, 2006).

Besides human rights principles, there are also pragmatic reasons for employer interest in tackling religious discrimination. Alienation and exclusion from the labor market on religious grounds is a source of disadvantage affecting individuals' ability to benefit from employment both economically and socially. And within organizations, combatting religious discrimination reduces workplace conflict and helps to promote a cohesive and socially inclusive culture. Interest in religious minorities' experiences in employment is growing as religious and belief diversity increases though factors such as immigration. Nevertheless perceptions of discrimination on grounds of religion and belief appear to be widespread (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

Despite the long history of conventions and laws addressing protection in this field and legal texts discussing their implications, there are relatively few published studies of employer efforts to manage and mitigate religious workplace discrimination. Employers report that the inclusion of religion and belief within their diversity frameworks is especially challenging (Özbilgin *et al*., 2015). This may be because the boundaries between religion and belief and other equality characteristics are unclear. For example, there is overlap between some ethnic groups and religious groups. And, as Kumra and Manfredi (2012, p. 224) point out there can be "competing claims" and "intersectionality" flowing from overlapping equality strands. For instance, certain religions may consider homosexuality as immoral; this can result in conflict between these equality strands. An example of intersectional discrimination can be seen in the response to religious dress codes; if Muslim women are banned from wearing headscarves, this discriminates on grounds of both religion (banning a required dress code) and gender (only women are subject to this dress code).

The same principles of dignity and autonomy apply to all equality strands, so one aspect of equality should not take precedence over another. This clearly indicates the potential challenges facing employers. However, it is relevant to note that freedom of religion is not an absolute right; in the European context, Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs is subject to "limitations … necessary … for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others" (European Court of Human Rights, 1950, p.11). This indicates that religious freedom does not take priority over other aspects of equality. There is also an argument that religion or belief results from personal choice and so is not viewed as having parity with other aspects of equality such as gender or race which are not chosen; although this viewpoint does not recognize that people may regard religion as part of their identity rather than a chosen characteristic (Vickers, 2006). Employers face challenges in ensuring that current and potential employees do not face discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, that religious practices can be accommodated, and in fostering inclusive workplace cultures, respectful of religious views. Zero tolerance of harassment together with workplace training to address bias and intolerance can assist in the promotion of equality of religion and belief for employees (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

The expatriate literature remains relatively silent on religion as a diversity characteristic. Where this equality strand is discussed, the main focus is on religion as an inter-cultural competency. The host country's prevalent religion "expresses a system of idealistic ethical beliefs" (Miao *et al*., 2011, p.532) for which expatriates should demonstrate respect (Al Mazrouei and Pech, 2015). Knowledge of the host country religion is thus considered important for cultural intelligence (Malek and Budhwar, 2013) enabling facilitation and completion of international tasks (Graf, 2004). Although expatriates often have different religious views from local people (Bader and Berg, 2014), limited research published to date appears to suggest that expatriates' religious beliefs are considered unimportant to their effectiveness by local and expatriate managers (Fisher and Härtel, 2003).

Summary and implications for further research

Our knowledge of the impact of religion in relation to minority expatriates is extremely limited. If expatriates practice a religion that may be unwelcome in host countries with different religious views, this can potentially lead to exclusion or even danger – but we have no expatriate diversity literature examining outcomes in this respect. The sparse literature published on the religious backgrounds of expatriates currently appears to focus on Western sending countries, suggesting Christianity as the predominant religion held by international assignees. Mamman and Richards (1996, p.287) note that open expression of belief is less prevalent in the "Christian West", being more of a private matter, compared with, for example, Islam where religious beliefs have a stronger influence on social interactions. Further research into expatriates' religious beliefs, for example by conducting studies into aspects of expatriate selection, adjustment and performance related to the religious backgrounds of internationally mobile personnel from non-Western as well as Western countries could widen our understanding in respect of religion as a diversity characteristic.

Age

Within most industrialized countries birth rates are falling and populations are aging. As people's life expectancy has increased, their working lives have become shorter with many leaving paid employment before retirement age. This has implications for governments attempting to raise tax revenues to meet social and other costs if their working populations become smaller than their retired populations. It also raises issues of concern for individuals themselves who potentially face poverty in their old age when state and private pension arrangements are unable to support their lengthening years outside of paid employment. Women are particularly disadvantaged in this respect compared to men as women not only live longer but their years of employment usually comprise periods of unpaid child-rearing and part-time work which negatively affect their pension position. Combatting discrimination against older workers is therefore a crucial concern for most industrial nations if working lives are to be extended (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

Besides the financial arguments, the principles of equal treatment and human rights provide a strong moral and ethical case to support age equality in the workplace. People are entitled to both dignity and participative democracy (Fredman, 2003): loss of dignity occurs if people are treated unfavorably due to their age and/or they are forced to retire when it is assumed that age alone determines they are no longer capable of performing their duties; social exclusion from being denied access to employment and its attendant social dimension can have devastating consequences for people’s well-being.

Older workers can be excluded from the workplace if the human capital that they bring results in higher employment costs and/or if employers are unwilling to invest resources in their training envisioning a shorter period of return on investment from so doing (Urwin, 2006). The business case for age diversity can work for or against older and younger workers. For older employees, their valuable experience can advantageously increase organizational human capital; but this may, alternatively, raise employment costs for no or low gain if their additional expertise adds little competitive advantage from what could be obtained from younger, less expensive, labor that can fulfil the same duties or be trained to do so. Exclusion can apply to younger workers as well though, for example if they are considered to lack experience or are not taken seriously (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Indeed, research suggests that workers over 50 and under 30 are most likely to report ageism (Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Snape and Redman, 2003).

For the individuals themselves age discrimination can lead to material disadvantage from loss of promotion, earnings and career growth. Ageism also affects self-esteem and motivation. This impacts on employers because those workers who perceive that they have experienced age discrimination are likely to demonstrate a lack of commitment, low morale, poor motivation, and disengagement from their work (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). This suggests that combatting age discrimination in the workplace can lead to potentially improved organizational performance.

In Western contexts age is reported as unrelated to expatriate performance (Albrecht *et al*., 2018) but with aging populations and an increasingly older expatriate age profile in evidence (Waibel *et al*., 2018), organizations are likely to have an interest in how age, as a diversity characteristic, contributes to successful expatriation outcomes. For example, older expatriates may be selected in order to leverage their greater experience (Albrecht *et al*., 2018), despite their potentially higher cost compensation packages linked to their seniority (Banai and Reisel, 1993).

Interestingly, academic literature presents a mixed picture in respect of the effect of age on assignment outcomes. For example, in Banai and Reisel's (1993) study (average age 38), age is correlated positively with organizational commitment (loyalty/identification) irrespective of role or nationality, although no link is established between age and involvement. In Albrecht *et al*.'s (2018) study (average age 37), older Western expatriates are more successful than their younger counterparts in gaining successful management and supervision outcomes; however, there is a negligible relationship between age, adjustment and job performance across a range of host countries. Waibel *et al*. (2018) also find no link between age and locational adjustment. With respect to repatriation, Black and Gregersen (1991) find that older expatriates readjust more easily on repatriation to the USA (average age being 41), although the authors make clear that does not necessarily mean that firms should send older workers abroad to facilitate re-entry. Literature relating to younger expatriates such as new graduates and millennials in their 20s suggests they possess an appetite for global mobility, motivated by learning, career development and employability, but with a preference for Western destinations with good telecommunications capabilities and shorter assignments/rotation programmes to maintain parental and friendship ties (Crowley-Henry and Collins, 2017).

In many Asian cultures age is associated with wisdom, expertise and competence (Albrecht *et al*., 2018). Older expatriates may therefore reap some benefits from their age in relation to their dealings with local nationals in such locations, aiding their adjustment and assignment outcomes. For example, in Selmer's (2001) study of Western expatriates in Hong Kong (average age 42), age is positively associated with adjustment (socio-cultural and psychological); age is potentially considered a proxy for maturity. And in Selmer *et al*.'s (2009) study in Greater China, a significant positive association between age and contextual/managerial performance is reported, with good working relationships fostered with local staff (although there is no association between age and technical performance). Yet, in Fisher and Härtel's (2003) study of Western expatriates in Thailand, the age of the Western manager is unrelated to perceptions of effectiveness by locals providing that the expatriates' educational qualifications are considered to be appropriate.

Summary and implications for further research

The academic literature provides little conclusive evidence that links successful job/technical performance and locational adjustment with age but it does appear to indicate more successful supervisory outcomes (Albrecht *et al*., 2018) and repatriation outcomes (Black and Gregersen,1991) being achieved by older expatriate managers. Older workers usually will have greater experience and maturity but will also likely be more expensive to relocate (Banai and Reisel, 1993). Selection criteria for expatriate roles will therefore need to consider the balance required between technical/professional skills and managerial competencies.

It is notable that in the fairly limited academic studies that report on the impact of expatriates' age on assignment outcomes, the average age range falls within a five year band (from 37-42 years); little information is available on younger or indeed older expatriates.

Further research could benefit from detailed studies into younger expatriates - for example those at the younger end of the millennial spectrum in their early to mid-20s at the start of their international careers - to explore any relationships between their age and assignment outcomes. Older expatriates may command respect and instill confidence in the local workforce but age does not automatically lead to cultural sensitivity and understanding (Mamman and Richards, 1996). This suggests that further research is necessary into the effectiveness of cultural training and preparation for expatriates of all ages with an examination of the benefits that such interventions might deliver for assignment outcomes for diverse expatriate age groups. A research focus on expatriates relocating from home countries with young populations, such as industrializing countries in Asia and Africa, rather than the traditional focus on Western sending countries with aging workforces, could also help assist in widening the scope of our understanding of age diversity within expatriation.

Sexual orientation

Studies of workplace discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation can be limited by data reflecting a lack of disclosure. Despite legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in many countries, the disclosure of their sexual identity by lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees can be a difficult and even dangerous decision. Sexual orientation is not usually readily observable so when the decision is taken to ‘come out’ this may lead to acceptance and support or, alternatively, serious negative repercussions including marginalization, exclusion, discrimination, and harassment (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

Stigma in a social context refers to negatively perceived attributes (Ragins, 2008). When subject to stigma, individuals’ identities, behaviors and cognitions are all affected; non-disclosure can then become a necessary strategy in such hostile or unsupportive environments. However, hiding one’s authentic self is inordinately stressful. It can mean living a double life, always in fear of discovery (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). It is also reported to have negative outcomes for sexual minorities' careers, workplace experiences, and well-being (Ragins *et al*., 2007). The complexity of the disclosure decision is influenced by a number of factors. For example, organizational culture, policy and practice, and top-down, long-term management support affect disclosure (Ragins and Cornwell, 2001); when sexual minorities have supportive supervisors and colleagues, they are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation than if discrimination against this minority is in evidence or if workgroups are unsupportive or hostile (Ragins *et al*., 2007).

Sexual orientation as an equality strand covers a range of non-heterosexuals. The literature predominantly addresses research into the experiences of gay men and lesbian women in the workplace; research in relation to the experiences of bisexual and trans people at work is relatively rare (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). This is important to note because the experiences of these sexual minorities do differ. For example, Corrington *et al*. (2019) find that bisexual men experience more workplace bias and are less likely to disclose their sexual orientation than bisexual women, potentially contributing to greater detrimental work- and health-related consequences for this group.

The terms 'trans people' and 'transgender people' are used to refer to people who "have a gender identity or wish to express their gender in a way which is contrary to their birth gender"; these include transsexuals, non-binary people, and others who define themselves as 'gender variant' (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012, p. 208). Members of the trans community are reported to have received scant attention in terms of research into their experiences in the workplace but, yet again, these are different. For instance, those undergoing gender reassignment have no option as to whether or not to disclose as change is evident. The trans community has been found to suffer particularly from bullying, harassment, rejection, and assault due to transphobia (Mitchell and Howarth, 2009).

Turning to the expatriate environment, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals represent an important source of global talent, creativity and innovation (McPhail and McNulty, 2015; McPhail *et al*., 2016; Munjal and Kundu, 2017) but remain relatively under-researched (Kim and Von Glinow, 2017a; McFadden and Crowley, 2018), particularly as their levels of disclosure may mean their minority status is hidden and so goes unrecognized (McNulty and Hutchings, 2016; Paisley and Tayar, 2016). Indeed, the majority (93%) of organizations do not track expatriates' sexual orientation (Kim and Von Glinow, 2017b). The literature recognizes legal intolerance, stigmatization and widespread discrimination faced by LGBT expatriates (see for example, Faeth and Kittler, 2020; Luiz and Spicer, 2019) highlighting that transgender individuals can experience severe workplace discrimination across the world (Singh, 2018).

Research has focused to a large extent on legal, cultural, duty of care, and intra-organizational issues (Gedro *et al*., 2013; Luiz and Spicer, 2019; McPhail and McNulty, 2015). There is also growing interest in the intersectionality of multiple identities experienced by sexual minorities within the cultural context of their host location – this can determine expression of identity, depending upon the local acceptability of sexual orientation and gender (Paisley and Tayar, 2016). The literature further suggests that host country's legal framework and cultural assumptions are linked in relation to the LGBT community's assessment of their receptiveness in the destination location (Suen, 2019). Culture determines how an individual will be perceived, treated and accepted within a social system; hence, the determination of an LGBT 'friendly' location is made through an assessment of the social and cultural reception received (Paisley and Tayar, 2016).

Homosexuality is illegal in around one-third of the world's countries (Luiz and Spicer, 2019) and conviction for homosexual acts remains punishable by death in some, such as Saudi Arabia (Faeth and Kittler, 2020; McNulty and Hutchings, 2016; McPhail and

McNulty, 2015); employers have a duty of care not to relocate LGBT employees in such circumstances. Even where same-sex relationships are legal, there may be invisible and implicit intolerance: for example, there may be no legal protection from workplace discrimination, same-sex couples may face lack of recognition of their partners for residency and/or work authorization visas, may be prohibited from marriage and adoption, and prevented from networking with other members of the LGBT community (Luiz and Spicer, 2019; McPhail and McNulty, 2015). Again, employers have a duty of care for LGBT expatriates' safety and well-being but in defining dangerous locations McPhail and McNulty (2015) note that risks can be moderated by individuals' risk-taking propensity, organizational support provided, and knowledge of real and perceived threats in each location; interventions provided in support of organizational duty of care can thus differ from those taken up in practice. Employers are urged to consider intra-organizational issues in relation to both the cultural and institutional frameworks of their subsidiary operations, bearing in mind that policy determined at headquarters may not be appropriate at local level. So even though there might be strong headquarters support for sexual minorities, this can result in negative consequences abroad affecting the company's reputation, even the threat of the loss of operating licenses (Luiz and Spicer, 2019); this reflects Ferner's (2005) warning that headquarters policy may not be embraced in host subsidiaries.

LGBT expatriates are reported as skeptical, even fearful, of a potentially hostile reception in the host location (Maley and Moeller, 2015). To gain local acceptance can result in the preference for non-disclosure of one's sexual orientation. However, hiding one's identity takes considerable effort creating the double cost of increased stress and impaired productivity (McPhail and Fisher, 2015) leading to reduced job performance (Paisley and Tayar, 2016). The literature suggests that many LGBT people pursue safer but more limiting career options by electing to remain behind the 'glass border' that precludes the advancement of minorities on the global stage (McNulty, 2015). Besides consideration of threats to their own safety and security, LGBT expatriates also need to assess outcomes for accompanying family members, for instance whether it is safe to bring same-sex partners with them on the assignment (Gedro *et al*., 2013). But the alternative of leaving family members behind to reduce risk in the host location brings its own challenges; geographic separation causes change to family relationships and can lead to stress (Hutchings and McNulty, 2018).

To assist sexual minorities to undertake international assignments and perform effectively on these, organizations are encouraged to take a strategic approach to fostering strong diversity climates (Gedro, 2010; Paisley and Tayar, 2016) for example by providing diversity training for colleagues (McPhail *et al*., 2016), and to tailor support for LGBT expatriates and their families (Maley and Moeller, 2015). Networks are reported as particularly helpful to reduce loneliness, provide a channel for employee voice (McFadden and Crowley-Henry, 2018), and provide information on rights and benefits (Luiz and Spicer, 2019); employee resource groups can enable LGBT minority employees to access supportive allies (McNulty *et al*., 2018).

Summary and implications for further research

The literature suggests that the global talent pool can be increased by supporting LGBT expatriates to accept assignments (McPhail and McNulty, 2015; McPhail *et al.*, 2016; Munjal and Kundu, 2017) but the opportunities and advantages that LGBT personnel present within global staffing remain unstudied (McPhail, 2017). It is notable that while academic research purports to study the experiences of LGBT expatriates, it has mainly focused on lesbian and gay assignees (McNulty *et al*., 2018; McPhail and Fisher, 2015) and is also primarily Western in context (Mizzi, 2014). Reviewing our understanding of the issues surrounding sexual minorities' expatriation should therefore be viewed in this light. As our knowledge of sexual minority expatriates is primarily based on small sample qualitative research of lesbian and gay assignees, further research into the experiences of other sexual minority expatriates is needed. Further research into LGBT diversity in a non-Western context would also help to broaden our understanding of this issue. In addition, larger sample, quantitative, and longitudinal research would all assist in gaining more insight into understanding LGBT expatriate diversity. Although the academic literature identifies that networks are helpful in supporting LGBT expatriation (Luiz and Spicer, 2019; McFadden and Crowley-Henry, 2018), we do not know how effective other forms of employer support might be in increasing LGBT expatriate diversity. Further research is needed to examine this as well.

Disability

Despite the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) - which addresses protection against workplace disability discrimination - disabled people remain at risk of economic exclusion and employment discrimination, potentially more so than other minority groups. This is not only contrary to social justice but also leads to significant societal costs (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

There are a number of models than can help us understand the experiences of disabled employees in the workplace. The tragedy model of disability locates impairment as the root cause of a disabled person's problems; the non-disabled assume that "disabled people want to be 'normal'" and are fearful of losing their perceived normality by becoming disabled themselves (Swain and French, 2000, p.573). The social model of disability differentiates between medical conditions that lead to impairments and how those with impairments are "oppressed by societal views of normality" to generate "socially constructed" disabilities that are imposed upon the individual (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000, p.159). So, under this model, an individual with impairment does not necessarily have incapability to work, rather environmental limitations preclude their ability in the workplace; thus how society is organized creates employment barriers that exclude these minorities. The affirmative model takes a more constructive view, directly opposing the tragedy model, by indicating that disabilities can have positive outcomes (Swain and French, 2000). This perspective also highlights that developing or being born with impairments is “to be accepted or respected on its own terms, as an ordinary part of human experience rather than inevitably as misfortune” (Cameron, 2014, p.24). Given that life expectancy is increasing and we are more likely to develop impairments as a result, the affirmative model provides a helpful means of viewing actions to combat discrimination against disabled minorities.

As the nature of impairment can vary widely from person to person, so its impact on disabled people’s exclusion from - and discrimination within - the labor market will vary. For this reason we do not have comparable data on employment rates for this minority group. However, evidence persists that disability discrimination remains widespread particularly in respect of those with mental health issues (Sayce, 2003). Negative stereotyping of disabled people leads to their qualifications being undervalued or discounted and so they are less successful in navigating the recruitment process (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). But even when disabled minorities enter the workforce, Deal (2007) reports subtle prejudice remains. For example, well-intentioned individuals may not offer extra responsibilities or training to disabled employees to shelter them from additional pressures; in so-doing they inadvertently limit these minorities’ career growth and increase their workplace vulnerability.

If employment policies are to integrate minorities with impairments within the labor market, they must necessitate not only removing barriers to access but also demonstrate economic value. Yet, as Woodhams and Danieli (2000) explain, the business case for embracing the full spectrum of disabilities - by providing the initiatives and/or adjustments necessary for access and full inclusion in workplace practices - is difficult to justify on grounds of cost and practicality, given the greater heterogeneity of conditions/outcomes to be addressed compared to other minority groups. The business case for diversity often rests on the benefits that flow from reflecting diverse customer representation within the organization's diverse workforce; however, as these authors note, there is no evidence that employing disabled people provides such a customer advantage.

While legislation and social policy support the employment of disabled people, these are insufficient to reduce the discrimination faced by this minority group. Persistent, multi-stranded strategies that tackle the manifestations of discrimination and harness power to institute positive developments are required if real change is to take place (Sayce, 2003).

Turning to the arena of international mobility, it is perhaps unsurprising given the commentary above that the academic expatriate literature is silent in respect of disability although some consultancy reports do suggest limited practical interventions. For example Air Inc. (2019) recommends funding accessibility, for example by building ramps when physical disabilities necessitate accessible access for assignees/family members in the workplace/living accommodation.

Summary and implications for further research

There is a gap in the expatriate literature in relation to our understanding of expatriate disability. To further enhance our understanding of these minority expatriates, research into the experiences of expatriates with disabilities is needed alongside an assessment of their international assignment outcomes. Our knowledge could also be enhanced through research into assignment experiences and outcomes when assignees are accompanied by family members with disabilities. Such research could assist in tailoring employer support to increase the representation of this minority expatriate group.

Discussion

Much attention has focused in the academic literature on the 'business case' for diversity. In our reading of this we must be mindful of a number of issues that potentially flow from pursuit of this objective. While noting calls for structural changes in organizational operations to improve employment outcomes for women and minorities (see for example, Kalev *et al*., 2006), first there is the risk of negative stereotyping that may accompany managerial action in undertaking positive action to improve gender and minority representation. Second, we should consider McDaniel's (2009) warning of what he calls 'gerrymandering practices' in the construction and application of personnel selection approaches that may be detrimental to others, undermining the principle of merit-based employment. Notwithstanding these concerns, when looking at employment through the lens of expatriation in multinational enterprises, aspirations to promote greater diversity fall short according to recorded empirical findings in publications reviewed in this chapter. Looking to the motivation for future research and analysis in this area consequent on these findings, the question is why do rhetoric and reality gaps prevail? And in what ways might theory help in focusing on what to research and how to interpret what is discovered?

While 'context' is an ambiguous term, "used as a catch-all for contingencies that might shape the contours of the phenomena under investigation", Jackson *et al.* (2003, p.813) offer the notion that this is an "inescapable" (*ibid*.) factor for diversity researchers to pay attention to. Context is where individuals, work teams, departments and entire organizations are to be found (Hackman, 1999). Context includes "social cues, norms, and meanings that shape behavior" (Jackson *et al*., 2003, p.813). Such cues, norms and meanings may be viewed as influencing the socio-psychological process of 'sensemaking' by managerial decision-takers (Brown *et al*., 2014). Weick (1995) draws attention to communication processes: language is deployed by the social actors in organizations to convey meaning. Doing so as part of legitimating, for example, managerial decision-taking as to a person's appropriate 'fit' to an expatriate identity: displaying a character "that embodies past experience and expectations … that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought" (Weick, 1995, pp.60-61). If such sensemaking encapsulates, for example, ethnocentric and gendered assumptions underpinning criteria for assessing 'successful' expatriation and the 'successful' expatriate, what may result is expatriate homogeneity despite espoused intent to promote organizational diversity.

We noted earlier in the chapter that expatriate diversity literature has focused primarily to date on adjustment to international assignment settings. This is in line with longstanding claims in the literature that success on international assignments depends significantly on the expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment to the new culture (Caligiuri *et al*., 2009). Researchers may wish to consider the diversity of institutional contexts in which consideration of potential heterogeneous (diverse) demographic features may be considered when seeking to interpret influences on the selection and appraisal of expatriates and the criteria against which their potential and success or failure will be judged. There is a role here for neo-institutional theory to interpret findings from published material on expatriate diversity, and to focus areas for future research. In particular, theorizing institutional isomorphism as in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) classic paper may be used to help researchers engage systematically with these influences on decision-taking and outcomes from human interaction in organizations when considering expatriate diversity.

Running counter to the business case for diversity in the make-up of corporate populations, the neo-institutional theory of structural change in contemporary organizations leans towards homogenization. State regulation of institutional contexts and their 'professionalisation' have combined to rationalize organizational culture and processes when dealing with uncertainty even where nominally the emphasis is on securing competitive differentiation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), for example in operating transnationally. Thus, it may help researchers interested in shaping their inquiries to consider the influence of the three mechanisms through which Di Maggio and Powell (1983) argue that institutional isomorphic change occurs: (1) coercive isomorphism, (2) memetic isomorphism and (3) normative isomorphism.

Often associated with the scaling up of operations - as in the case of international corporate expansion - coercive isomorphism tends to shift focus in organizational control away from specific performance criteria on to outcomes in the form of common standards mandated by governments or by corporations centrally. Hence, management in multinationals may rely on the existence of a legal framework for discrimination by race/religion/sexual orientation in certain countries to rationalize their expatriation decisions.

Even if institutional coercion is limited, uncertainties faced by organizational decision-takers - such as when corporate managements in Western multinationals are making choices about resourcing operations abroad - may lead them to succumb to memetic forces embodying past experience and expectations (Weick, 1995) resulting in imitation of others in whose wake they are following. Hence, safety-first cues, norms and meanings (Jackson *et al*., 2003) may set the tone for expectations around the conditions for successful expatriation leading decision-takers towards approaches that a more objective assessment may judge to be prejudiced against those whose demographic characteristics depart from the individuals and groups that have traditionally made up the expatriate population: “typically senior managers, Western, males in their late 40s or early 50s, with an accompanying female spouse and children” (McNulty and Hutchings, 2016, p.699).

Normative pressures in organizations applicable in the contexts discussed here may stem from ‘professionalization’ of managers by reference to a cognitive base and access to networked relations from which to legitimize their authority (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Sources of accreditation and legitimization - for example, universities and training intuitions as well as major consultancies - codify and promulgate normative benchmarks of professional behavior. “Such mechanisms [it may be argued] create a pool of almost interchangeable individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organizations and possess a similarity of orientation and disposition that may override variations in tradition and control that might otherwise shape organizational behaviour” (*op. cit*., p.152). And here there are adverse consequences for those whose demographic characteristics may not be explicitly an issue at the time, for instance when applicants are being sought and screened for expatriation. “Many professional career tracks are so closely guarded … at the entry level” (*ibid.*) that they shrink the pool from which selection for international assignments is made by eliminating at a far earlier stage those ‘below the surface’ whose profile is more diverse. And if “entrants to professional career tracks who somehow escape the filtering process - for example, Jewish naval officers, woman stockbrokers, or Black insurance executives - [they] are likely to be subjected to pervasive on-the-job socialization” (*op. cit*., p.153) where socialization acts as an isomorphic force.

Researchers may seek to uncover the prevalence of coercive, memetic and normative justifications for departures between espoused policy on diversity and enacted outcomes – and what managements and workforces in multinational enterprises have to say about tensions that result where a ‘home’ jurisdiction may require compliance with the principles of equality of opportunity in hiring, promotion and recognition of employees. Empirical research, framed using ideas around isomorphism and sensemaking to uncover evidence of contextual influences to help address why enacted policies applied to women and minorities in multinationals are falling short of today’s best practice norms, could lead in the future to ways of lubricating horizontal and vertical routes to participation in expatriate experiences among a greater diversity of organizational talent more reflective of contemporary society at large.

Final remarks

Mainstream workplace diversity research has focused to a large degree on separate examination of diversity characteristics but it is important to understand that a multi-dimensional approach is necessary. As Jackson *et al*., (2003, p.806) explain: “It seems likely that social processes and their outcomes are influenced by the complex confluence of diversity dimensions, not isolated dimensions of diversity”. Individuals may be identified using “multiple attributes (e.g. “white female engineer” or “Asian male scientist”)” (*ibid*.). This chapter has focused primarily on separate aspects of expatriate diversity. However, the importance of considering intersectionality within expatriate research cannot be understated. Expatriates present a range of diversity characteristics affecting how they are selected for expatriation and received in the host country. Future research will need to consider how multiple diversity characteristics are supported together if the performance of each individual assignee is to be maximized to both their and their employer’s advantage.

Finally, in the Covid-19 pandemic era, virtual international working particularly from the home country when physical mobility is not required has become more commonplace (Santa Fe, 2020). This might assist with issues that have typically held back women’s mobility such as dual careers and family responsibilities and address the legal and cultural restrictions that have precluded the transfer of LGBT and other minority assignees to particular countries. Further research into the effect of virtual assignments in the context of widening expatriate diversity would therefore be most welcome.

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