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Advancing Theory by Addressing the Gender Data Gap

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1. Purpose and Objectives

This special issue seeks to attract new research that sheds light on the causes and consequences of the ‘Gender Data Gap’ in organisation and management theories. The Gender Data Gap refers to circumstances where the majority of data on which organisational decisions are based are biased in favour of males (Criado Perez, 2019; Time, 2020). That is, data are often incomplete and unreliable because of the ‘absence of information about aspects of women’s lives’ (Buvinic & Levine, 2016: 32). This leads to, for example, devices designed to optimally fit male handspans, personal protective equipment designed for male bodies and potentially dangerously ill-fitting for women, and organisational practices such as informal networking over drinks in the evening, when women and caregivers are not present. Understanding Gender Data Gap effects is important for designing effective interventions to achieve gender equality all the way up the organisational ladder. Moreover, the data gap problem offers new insights on possible leverage points for change.

In line with EMJ’s tradition of publishing papers on gender differences and their impact on organisations (e.g. Ali & Konrad, 2017; Paton & Dempster, 2002; Ramos, Latorre, Tomás, & Ramos, 2021), this special issue aims to not merely identify and describe Gender Data Gaps, but also explain their causes and consequences. We seek submissions that explain *how*, *why*, *where* and *when* this data gap in organisations might require rethinking taken-for-granted assumptions in our theories, organisational design rules, work processes, and management practices in order to close the gap. The published articles in this special issue should address the Gender Data Gap’s impact on management theory and practice. Hence, we seek contributions that clearly advance theory by elucidating the effects of the data gap on the careers of women. Further, we seek contributions that reimagine the roles of women and men in work settings, and, in doing so, advance evidence-based remedies for gender inequity and inequality in organisations. By gender equity, we mean ‘fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs’; by gender equality, we mean providing ‘men and women with the same equal opportunities’ (Fortune, 2020).

The International Labour Organization recognises that data gaps are pervasive and hinder the achievement of policy goals (Discenza & Walsh, 2020). Empowering women and men with the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities must be the overarching goal. While it is generally acknowledged (e.g. Forbes, 2020; Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, & Van Praag, 2013) that both gender equity and gender equality can positively impact organisational performance, companies are still far from achieving equity and equality. Disparities persist in numerous facets of organisational life, including gender pay (e.g. Joshi, Sen, & Bob, 2015; Whitehouse, 2001), career progression and burnout recovery (Lean In &

disadvantage women, a focus on the Gender Data Gap is a novel approach because it requires looking beyond the female disadvantages caused by existing rules and policies within organisations and instead investigating the basis (e.g. male data, assumptions, and force of habit) for these policies. The policies or practices of organisations might not discriminate overtly against women but if they are based solely on male data (i.e. office temperature set for optimal male cognitive performance, Chang & Kajackaite, 2019), the resulting male bias in organisational expectations and outcomes negatively impacts women's careers. Such policies and practices significantly impact whether women reach top executive positions, perceive their careers as fulfilling, and need to compete in environments that do not reflect them, neither addressing their needs nor capturing the realities of their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual experiences.

2. Topics of Interest

This special issue focuses on the effects and possible solutions to gender disparities caused by the Gender Data Gap. Analysing this data gap with its effects and possible solutions in detail will deepen our knowledge of gender-based discrepancies and their origins and implications. Below, we present a number of lines of inquiry that seem particularly fruitful in stimulating novel theoretical insights.

First, we encourage contributions that explore the evolution of the Gender Data Gap as well as the mechanisms maintaining and reproducing it. From a normative perspective, for instance, bridging sexual harassment research and network theory appears promising. In a recent review, Cortina and Areguin (2021: 289) stated that, from a legal perspective, sexual harassment is seen as sex discrimination that 'perpetuates, enforces, and polices a set of gender norms at work that seek to feminize women and masculinize men'. In this context, the Gender Data Gap seems to arise from perpetuating and reproducing male-dominated norms concerning success and collaboration. The profound impact such norms have on women's career trajectories, workplace wellbeing, and attainment of top management positions has not yet been the focus of studies on gender differences in the workplace. Moreover, diversity management has often been limited to fixing the numbers, while neglecting the need to fix the organisational culture that is based on male data bias (Tzanakou, 2019). The following are possible questions that contributors might address:

- How do the individual characteristics and behaviours of managers and leaders accentuate or attenuate the effects of the Gender Data Gap?
- What interpersonal processes maintain and reproduce versus interrupt the effects of the data gap?
- How (i.e. through what processes and mechanisms) do organisational cultures facilitate versus prevent the development and perpetuation of the Gender Data Gap?
- How do firm- and industry-level factors contribute to Gender Data Gap effects on women's careers?

2.2. Effects of the Gender Data Gap on Women

Second, we seek contributions on the effects of the Gender Data Gap on women's careers and on their health and wellbeing. For instance, in organisations that espouse masculine norms, members report more bullying, harassment and abusive leadership (Glick, Berdahl, & Alonso, 2018; Matos, O'Neill, & Lei, 2018; cf. Cortina & Areguin, 2021, p. 296). Third parties can also perpetuate and reproduce inequality in organisations. For instance, Fernando and Prasad (2019) showed how women who aim to report harassment are encouraged by HR advisors to self-silence and, as a consequence, their experience remains invisible. This causes a data gap that if addressed could help in designing more effective workplace harassment interventions (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). Other actors, such as the media or headhunters, might play a role in making visible otherwise invisible activities that are typically performed by and expected from women. For example, pastoral and care work (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014; Power, 2020) are often devalued and discounted and, hence,

- How does the Gender Data Gap affect women's careers and upward mobility?
- To what extent do Gender Data Gaps cause or exacerbate toxic cultures and workplaces?
- How do various social actors (HR managers, activist organisations, headhunters, the media, universities and business schools) help maintain or close the data gap and with what consequences?
- How can our management and organisation theories be extended and strengthened by making 'invisible acts' (e.g. instrumental work activities done by women that are neither recognised nor rewarded) more visible?

2.3. Effects of the Gender Data Gap on Intervention Effectiveness

A third promising line of inquiry concerns the implications of the Gender Data Gap on workplace interventions, especially those targeting women. When considering which interventions might reduce or eliminate inequalities and their impact on women, we see two possible routes: one tackling the Gender Data Gap itself and the other attenuating its negative consequences for women. Moreover, since interventions are often based on Gender Data Gap biased theories, how can management scholars contribute to 'unbiasing' existing theories and conceptualisations? Accordingly, we encourage questions such as (but not exclusive to):

- What are the assumptions in management and organisation studies that must be revisited based on novel insights derived from efforts to close the Gender Data Gap?
- How does the Gender Data Gap intersect with cross-cutting systems of disadvantage (e.g. race, age and ability)? What are the implications for the effectiveness of interventions designed to 'help women'?

In sum, we encourage contributions that address any of the above issues. We propose that the development and facilitation of the data gap, as well as its effects on women's careers and wellbeing, should be approached from a multi-phenomenal and multi-level perspective that comprises leadership, values, norms and goals at the managerial and organisational levels.

- **Submission Instructions**

Every manuscript submitted to this special issue must provide both theoretical/conceptual and practical contributions. Conceptual, review and empirical papers will all be considered. All submissions are subject to the *European Management Journal's* double-blind peer review process, should respect the journal's general publication guidelines and should be submitted through <https://www.editorialmanager.com/eumj/default1.aspx> between 1st August and 18th September 2023. The special issue will be published in 2025. To ensure that all manuscripts are correctly identified for consideration for this special issue, it is important that authors select '**SI: Gender Data Gap**' as the paper type. Please direct any questions about the special issue to *Dr Sonja Sperber* (sonja.sperber@wu.ac.at).

The *European Management Journal* (EMJ) is a flagship scholarly journal, publishing internationally leading research across all areas of management. *EMJ* articles challenge the status quo through critically informed empirical and theoretical investigations and present the latest thinking and innovative research on major management topics, while still being accessible and interesting to non-specialists as well as reflective practitioners and managers. *EMJ* articles are characterised by their intellectual curiosity and diverse methodological approaches, which lead to contributions that impact profoundly on management theory and practice. We welcome interdisciplinary research that synthesises distinct research traditions to shed new light on contemporary challenges in the broad domain of European business and management. Cross-cultural investigations addressing the challenges for European management scholarship and practice in dealing with global issues and contexts are strongly encouraged.

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Corinne Post is the Fred J. Springer Endowed Chair in Business Leadership and Professor of Management at Villanova School of Business (USA). Previously, she was C. Scott Hartz '68 Term Professor and Chair of the Department of Management at the College of Business at Lehigh University (USA). Her research addresses questions related to diversity and diversity management, notably on women and boards and in top management teams. Her work is published in leading academic journals including *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. Professor Post served as Associate Editor for the *Journal of Management Studies* (2016–20). She is Editorial Board member for *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Career Development International*, and Consulting Editor and Strategic Advisory Committee member for the *Journal of Management Studies*. Professor Post chaired the Careers division of the Academy of Management and co-edited a published book on diversity.

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Cordula Barzantny is Professor of International Management at Toulouse Business School (France). Her main research interests are in cross-cultural management and global leadership. She has published on international, comparative and cross-cultural management issues, often with worldwide teams of colleagues and large-scale surveys (*EJIM*, *IBR*, *JWB* and *Organization Studies*). She is an active reviewer and advisor on Editorial Boards for the *Journal of World Business*, *European Management Journal*, *Journal of Business Research*, *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management* and *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* and has been a Senior Associate Editor with the *European Journal of International Management*. Prior to completing her PhD at Toulouse 1 Capitole University, her professional career was in finance, accounting and management control with Siemens. She is actively promoting more gender equality for women in aerospace and high-technology sectors.

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