TECHPACT
Equity for All
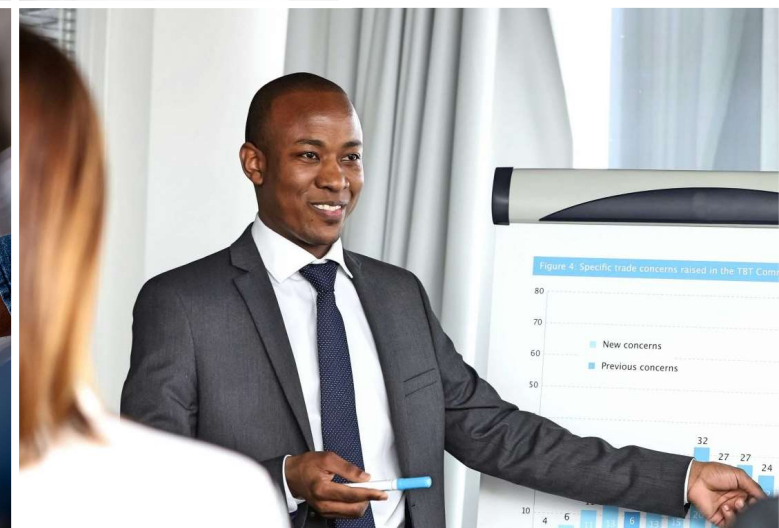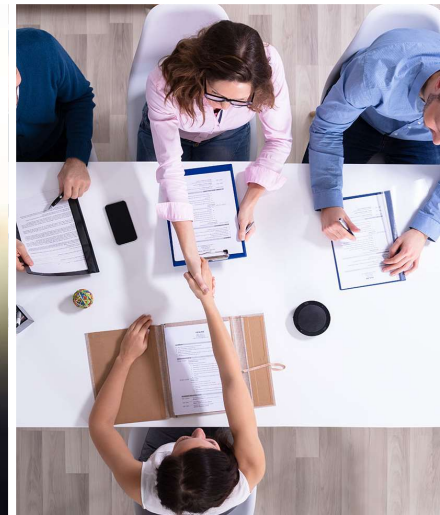
IMPACT BEYOND THE DIVERSITY HEADLINES

How we can drive meaningful diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in Technology

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Executive Summary

While people have made significant progress in courtrooms and boardrooms to protect and provide all people with equal opportunity, significant structural challenges remain for a large and growing number of people in achieving true equality in corporate America. This is especially true of the Technology industry.

There are four drivers of institutional barriers - biased hiring processes inhibiting diversity; unfair opportunities and recognition inhibiting equity; exclusionary norms and rituals inhibiting inclusion; psychologically unsafe workplaces inhibiting belonging.

This white paper lays out our perspective on how Technology companies continue to perpetuate institutional barriers in ways unique to this industry and provides a call to action consisting of twelve steps to drive tangible change as companies travel the path from marginalization and exclusion to belonging.

Taken together, these twelve steps can go a long way towards creating workplaces, organizations and industries that engender a feeling of true belonging among all people.

A Promise Partially Fulfilled

Loving. Lawrence. Obergefell. Silicon Valley CEOs. Priyanka. Laverne. K-Pop. Asian MCU superhero. Condi. Kamala. Mayor Pete. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

The public consciousness of our country, focused as it is on celebrities, public figures, and exceptional achievers, would seem to embrace the growing diversity of America. We as a society have made significant progress in courtrooms and boardrooms instituting laws and policies that address the challenges faced by people who do not fit the historic norms of American society. These changes have created real opportunities for an exceptional few to achieve their full potential, irrespective of who they are, where they are from, who they worship, what they look like or who they love.

> **A large and growing number of people continue to face barriers at each stage of their relationship with Corporate America.**

However, these publicly celebrated achievements also distract us from the fact that a large and growing number of people continue to face barriers at each stage of their relationship with Corporate America. This is especially true of the Technology industry, where the spectacular success of some people at the top detracts from the reality that this is an industry where women and Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and LGBTQ people continue to be excluded and marginalized.

The Road Not Travelled

To understand why Technology companies continue to significantly lag behind progress in other sectors of the economy[1], including other STEM disciplines[2] and especially in emerging and growing roles[3], companies need to start with the ideal vision of a fair and equitable workplace – having a workforce at all levels that reflects the communities they live in and serve, and creating a workplace where all people feel equally valued and protected.

> **Transforming an organization or an industry to fully empower all people as equal members requires a journey that addresses barriers at each step.**

This vision cannot be achieved through a simplistic view of diversity as a number, with a singular focus on meeting a target distribution.

Reducing DEI aspirations to mere numbers diminishes the people companies aim to serve and prevents us from taking the necessary steps to address inherent barriers that persist to this day.

Transforming an organization or an industry to fully empower all people as equal members requires a journey that addresses barriers at each step.

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The first step in the journey, and the one companies often stop at, is diversity, which translates to providing equal, or at least unhindered, access to the same opportunities for everyone. Going beyond diversity is equity, which involves creating conditions through which all people can equally benefit from these opportunities. While diversity and equity policies may address structural barriers, there are barriers created by specific workplace behaviors that impact inclusion.

Once diversity, equity and inclusion are achieved, an organization needs to drive belonging by creating an environment where people feel psychologically safe to voice ideas, willingly seek and provide honest feedback, collaborate, take risks and experiment.[4]

There are four key factors that continue to perpetuate these institutional barriers, corresponding to each step in the journey.

Table 1: Four Key Drivers of Institutional Barriers

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Biased Hiring Processes Inhibiting Diversity	**Unfair Opportunities and Recognition Inhibiting Equity**	**Exclusionary Norms and Rituals Inhibiting Inclusion**	**Psychologically Unsafe Work Inhibiting Belonging**
The process through which organizations attract and recruit people reflects the biases and unfairness of broader society, ensuring that only a small and unrepresentative sliver of qualified candidates apply or are hired	Tribal loyalties, unconscious bias and self-censorship work in a vicious cycle to skew opportunities, recognition and rewards to accrue disproportionately to people who already benefit significantly from other institutional biases	Workplace culture imposes a high psychological burden on people who are forced to deny parts of their authentic selves to avoid being the subject of uncomfortable conversations or the object of subtle and overt discrimination	Workplaces escalate from psychological burden to harm more often than people realize, and impact performance, health and well-being through actions and especially non-actions that create and perpetuate these dangers

> **Technology leaders have to commit themselves to direct action that addresses these barriers in a structured and purposeful way**

Technology leaders have to focus beyond policies, pronouncements and public figures, and commit themselves to direct action that addresses each of these barriers in a structured and purposeful way. This article lays out our perspective on how Technology companies continue to perpetuate institutional barriers in ways unique to this industry, and provides a call to action to drive tangible change as companies travel the path from marginalization and exclusion to belonging.

Only at the end of this journey will employees be able to realize their full personal and professional potential, and drive team and organization success.[5]

1. Biased Hiring Processes Inhibiting Diversity

The input is not biased, people are. When confronted with the continued underrepresentation of people who reflect broader society, the general refrain is that the hiring and workplace processes are fair and unbiased, but there are just not that many qualified people beyond the usual suspects applying for the jobs. This "cannot address input bias" argument is a key inhibitor of the diversity dialog, excusing the lack of representation in the hiring process.

Companies need to recognize that what is dismissed as "input bias" - a statistically skewed sample whose distribution the decision-maker has no control over but based on which they need to make decisions – is only part of the issue.

> Input bias contributes to lack of diversity in Technology, but other biases also have large impacts that need to be addressed.

Hiring bias exacerbates the existing disparities in education, especially STEM education[6], through practices such as those listed in the table below.

Table 2: Examples of Biased Hiring Processes and their Impacts

Biased Hiring Processes

- Limiting recruitment to "top schools" disproportionately benefits people with high parental income and wealth[7], from homes in non-redlined[8] well-funded school districts[9], and legacy status[10,11]

- Unpaid internships provide practical experience for those who can afford it[12], but force others to pick low-skill, low-income jobs over unpaid work in a field of their education, training and passion

- A high percentage of all lateral hires in technology are filled through network recommendations[13], and these "familiarity hires" exacerbate underlying biases in education and access[14]

- Gendered language in job descriptions (e.g. rockstar, aggressive, ninja) discourage women[15], and superfluous requirements tailored to specific profiles eliminate other qualified candidates

- Human and algorithmic bias lead to persistent[16] negative impacts on people with "Black"[17] or "foreign"[18] names, immigrants[19], and people re-entering the workforce[20]

- Current organizational leadership reflects historical and current recruiting biases, and fails to recognize education, achievement and life experience that is not within their frame of reference

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2. Unfair Opportunities and Recognition Inhibiting Equity

The focus on meritocracy and exceptionalism make companies less likely to identify and address systemic unfairness.

To the winners go the spoils. In the secular mythology of American exceptionalism, meritocracy is a proxy for fairness and persistence is the prerequisite for success, as eulogized by countless rags-to-riches stories. As a result, people are conditioned to accept that the mechanisms that companies rely on to recognize and promote people are reflective of this meritocracy and reward efforts and achievements fairly.

This dynamic normalizes deep-seated biases and inefficiencies, where people work under the assumption of a fair and unbiased work environment, while these environments continue to inhibit their success.

Table 3: Examples of Unfair Opportunities and Recognition, and their Impacts

Women are overlooked for key projects[21] or stretch assignments[22] based partly on assumptions about the ability to balance work commitments[23] and the "double shift" at home[24]

Women[25] and racial minorities[26] are less likely to be perceived as leaders, and tend to have supporting roles in teams vs. prominent ones visible to leadership[27,28]

Lack of relatable role models[29] as mentors limit learning and acculturation, while others have mentors from similar backgrounds acting as active career advocates[30]

Performance appraisals are based on subjective behavioral elements, which reinforce cultural and gender norms[31] that are already overrepresented at senior levels

Performance is evaluated by a narrow group of direct supervisors and leaders, reinforcing small team biases and favoring people who are more similar to the leaders[32]

Imposter syndrome, felt more acutely by women[33,34] and racial minorities[35], leads to reluctance to pursue goals[36]; some people can "fake it until they make it", others are "doubted till they're outed"

3. Exclusionary Norms and Rituals Inhibiting Inclusion

Let us introduce you to the original cancel culture.

This is not about "Central Park Karen" or any "Maskless Warrior" being held to account for their actions. This is about the thousands of people who do not trend on social media, going through the workplace every day, cancelling significant parts of themselves through elaborate coping mechanisms, just to exist.

Workplace rituals in most companies are based on the social and cultural norms of a very specific subset of the population that is grossly overrepresented at middle and senior levels in most organizations.

These compel other people who are excluded by these norms and rituals to confront daily reminders of their otherness, even in the absence of overt hostility and discrimination.
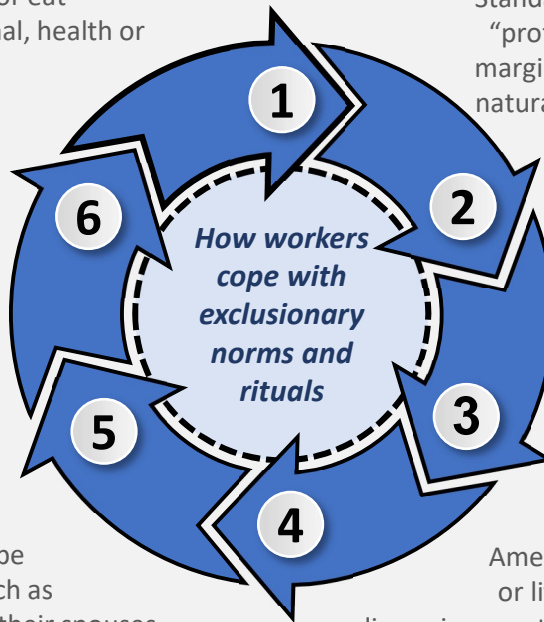
> Workplace rituals based on a narrow set of norms exclude many people and compel them to deny their authentic selves just to fit in.

Table 4: Examples of Exclusionary Norms and Rituals, and their Impacts

People who do not drink alcohol or eat specific (or any) meats for personal, health or religious reasons are expected to attend social events that feature alcohol and meat-centric food options

Use of dead names[45] or pronouns[46] and restrooms divided by biologically assigned binary sex[47] remind transgender people that the workplace can be as hostile[48] as the rest of society[49]

LGBTQ workers, facing inconsistent legal protections, cope through stressful mechanisms such as inverted or neutral pronouns for their spouses, or not discussing families altogether[44]

How workers cope with exclusionary norms and rituals

Standards for and attitudes towards "professional" attire single out and marginalize people with tattoos[37] or naturally curly hair[38] or mannerisms not part of the mainstream[39]

People change or "Americanize" names[40] and accents, and still endure misnaming and mispronunciation[41], and negative perceptions of performance[42] and communication skills[43]

People without normative American backgrounds, upbringing or lifestyles are excluded by social discussions centered around these topics, and reminded routinely that they are different

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4. Psychologically Unsafe Work Inhibiting Belonging

While the line between the unconsciously exclusionary to psychologically unsafe is sometimes difficult to draw, it is easy to know when organizations cross this line.

Workplaces sometimes expose people to overt cases of bullying and intimidation, but more frequently create environments where people are pressured to fit in, blamed for circumstances outside their control, afraid to make mistakes, and forced take on additional work with no clear benefit or reasonable prospect of success.

> The impacts of psychologically unsafe work are more acutely felt by people in more perilous and vulnerable positions.

Regardless of the specific cause or effect, psychologically unsafe workplaces lead to a high level of stress, fear and alienation among employees.

While these dynamics reflect a broader issue with power imbalance and impact all people on the wrong side of any power divide, the impacts are more acutely felt by women, immigrants and Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and LGBTQ employees, who are institutionally in more perilous and vulnerable positions than other workers.

Table 5: Examples of Psychologically Unsafe Work and their Impacts

Despite a high level of workplace harassment[50] in a tight-knit industry, Technology companies still hire people in senior roles who are known for creating unsafe and toxic work environments[51]	The "work hard play hard" culture[52] creates addictive behaviors[53] and excludes people with spouses, children or family who need to sacrifice personal commitments to try and fit in[54]	Women and racial minorities are handed "glass cliff" assignments" without the mandate, support or tools to achieve these goals, but are held accountable for the inevitable inability to perform[55]
Pervasive and false assumptions about "diversity hires" being in their roles because they meet some identity criteria, and not being as qualified as other hires[56], erode morale and trust	People are put in prominent roles showcasing diversity in organization and expected to do this extra work for free, while also being treated less favorably for performing these roles[57]	Women[58] and racial minorities[59] who have good ideas or add value often do not get the credit, recognition or rewards, as these are often appropriated or subject to higher scrutiny

A 12-Step Program for Real Change

Based on the definition of addiction as "a brain disorder characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences" [60], our society and corporate America are addicted to cultural biases and institutional barriers that systematically marginalize over 75% of the population.

The best way to address addiction is a 12-step program, and these twelve steps can address institutional barriers to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging that may not be specific to, but are particularly prevalent in, the Technology industry. Critically, these steps represent just a more thoughtful and purposeful approach to work Technology companies already do, or should be doing. The typical barriers cited to stop action from being taken – disruption, cost, risk or controversy – do not apply to any of these steps.

Hire the Best Person, not the Best Person You Know

- **Stop Familiarity Hires:** Look beyond immediate networks and reach a broader audience through networking sites, external recruiters, professional associations, and more representative campuses and job fairs. Simultaneously, reduce the bias towards "top" schools and advanced degrees and almost identical roles in almost identical companies, and focus on what drives success - deep technical expertise, managing rapid and unpredictable change, developing new concepts, and rallying people behind a vision.

- **Anonymize Resumes:** Given the hiring bias based on names, gender, educational pedigree, race, ethnicity and even ZIP codes, ensure that resumes are anonymized to focus only on relevant qualifications and achievements. While this will not address the inevitable "Zoom double take" when people see a person who does not fit their preconceived notions, it will at least get that candidate past the human and algorithmic biases that exclude people who do not fit an arbitrary profile of the ideal candidate.

- **Ensure Representative Recruiters:** To mitigate the remaining human biases in the hiring process, ensure that the panel of recruiters is broader in terms of function, level and representation than just the immediate hiring manager or leaders in a specific group. This will ensure more balanced input into the candidate's qualifications and fit based on a broader set of perspectives, and address the risk that team culture in small groups tends to drive homogeneity and lack of openness to new ideas or personalities.

Create Equity through Objectivity and Empowerment

- **Create Unbiased Performance Metrics:** Behavioral or attitudinal attributes such as showing "initiative" or being a "team player" are integral to current performance metrics, and tend to recognize and reward interpersonal styles associated with specific cultures and identities. This focus on subjective behaviors over tangible and measurable metrics puts people who have different styles and approaches at a disadvantage. If companies focus primarily on tangible metrics, these subjective behaviors are greatly reduced.

- **Broaden Evaluation Inputs:** Evaluation processes limited to immediate supervisors or small teams/groups run the same risk of small team bias as hiring processes. These limited inputs are also susceptible to some people being better positioned to manage or manipulate perceptions based on cultural affinity or organizational familiarity. Broadening the inputs to peers, direct reports, internal stakeholders and external customers can provide a more rounded and less biased view into individual performance.

- **Drive Equitable Opportunities:** Leadership roles in teams or projects, or stretch assignments, are critical to career growth. By limiting these roles to people who "look the part" or "talk the game", companies not only perpetuate cultural biases and barriers that are difficult to overcome, they also risk overlooking the most qualified for a role. While creating opportunities, leaders also need to encourage people to address self-doubt through open discussion, and create a culture that encourages risk-taking and experimentation.

Purposefully Create an Inclusive Workplace

- **Design by Purpose:** For an industry obsessed with design thinking, Technology companies do a spectacularly poor job of incorporating these principles into workplaces. Leaders must evaluate any decision, from something as critical as hybrid work guidelines to as seemingly trivial as social events, with a lens of, "is the outcome of this decision going to have the same impact on all". While you are at it, please create private all-access restrooms. Cisgender women and men do not like public restrooms either[61].

- **Encourage Storytelling:** People who fit historical norms tell stories all time. No one complains about anyone rubbing anything in anyone's faces when barbecues or golf or boating or soccer or ballet are discussed. Companies need to encourage other people, especially those who are leaders or role models, to tell similar stories about their lives. This normalizes other life experiences and signals to people who are not routinely included that they too are part of the organization.

- **Don't Call Me by Your Name:** It is shocking how often even otherwise supportive people butcher "foreign" or "ethnic" names or use familiar contractions, and make sincere efforts to pronounce European names properly while glossing over continued mispronunciation of others. Even without the associations with conquered and enslaved people being given new names by their oppressors[62], pronouncing someone's name properly is a simple but profound symbol of respect and recognition as a full and equal person.

Make Psychological Safety a Priority

- **Stop Normalizing Sociopathy:** Technology companies continue to hire and promote people with well-known histories of bullying and harassment. Background checks do not capture these issues and people overlook or even celebrate these as "personality quirks" of high performers. Recruiters need to seek broader inputs from former direct reports and peers, check for publicly available information on terminations, settlements and lawsuits, and make protecting workplaces from habitual abusers a priority.

- **End the Cult of Overwork:** The reality is that there are times when technology workers, like other essential workers, will need to work long hours and holidays or weekends to address critical needs. However, this does not require that "work hard play hard" becomes part of corporate culture and values. A mix of flexible work hours, flexible vacation policies and the ability to "clock off" early or "clock in" late when possible can help restore balance to workers' lives, and create synergy between work and personal life.

- **Reinforce a Culture of Trust:** Leaders must eliminate disparate treatment of women and racial minorities in terms of attributing credit for successes and providing constructive opportunities for improvement. All people given critical tasks must have the position, role clarity, resources and governance required to succeed. People who take on additional responsibilities and deliver additional results must see direct translation into promotion and higher compensation. Please make the buck stop where it should stop.

From Exclusion to Belonging

There have been more than three decades of EEO policies, codes of conduct, training and employee resource groups trying to address the challenges with diversity in Technology companies. While these are important to set the baseline, they represent exactly that, the minimum baseline requirement to be a modern workplace. Companies need to go far beyond these to drive real change that addresses the real challenges that people still face.

Taken together, these twelve steps can go a long way towards creating workplaces, organizations and industries that engender a feeling of true belonging among all people. These steps may not address the continuing need for broader, structural changes in organizations and society, but these are the steps companies can start taking tomorrow.

As leaders in the Technology industry, we can create meaningful change for people who need it most, through tangible commitments and actions outlined above that will progressively drive diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in Technology organizations.

Let us begin.

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    Compared to overall private industry, the high-tech sector employed a larger share of whites (63.5% to 68.5%), Asian Americans (5.8% to 14%) and men (52% to 64%), and a smaller share of African Americans (14.4% to 7.4%), Hispanics (13.9% to 8%), and women (48% to 36%). In the tech sector, whites are represented at a higher rate in the Executives category vs. Professional roles such as computer programming (83.3% vs. 68%). However, other groups are represented at significantly lower rates in the Executives category than in the Professionals category; African Americans (2% to 5.3%), Hispanics (3.1% to 5.3%), and Asian Americans (10.6% to 19.5%). Only 20% of people in the Executives category in high tech are women, compared to the overall private sector at 29%.

2   Maria Temming, "STEM's racial, ethnic and gender gaps are still strikingly large", Science News, April 14, 2021.
    Women are vastly overrepresented in health care, as they have been for decades. They now make up about 40% of physical scientists, up from 22% in 1990. But women constitute only 25% of workers in computer science, down from 32% in 1990. Black professionals made up only 9% of STEM workers in the United States, but this varied from 11% in health care to 5-7% in computer science and engineering. Hispanic professionals made up only 8% percent of people working in STEM. White and Asian professionals remain overrepresented in STEM.

3   Leanne Kemp, "Having women in leadership roles is more important than ever, here's why", World Economic Forum, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/more-women-in-leadership-shouldnt-matter-but-it-really-does/, March 3, 2020.
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7   Gregor Aisch, Larry Buchanan, Amanda Cox and Kevin Quealy, "Some Colleges Have More Students from the Top 1% Than the Bottom 60", New York Times, January 18, 2017.
    At 38 colleges in America, including five in the Ivy League – Dartmouth, Princeton, Yale, Penn and Brown – more students came from the top 1% of the income scale than from the entire bottom 60%. Roughly one in four of the richest students attend an elite college – universities that typically cluster toward the top of annual rankings. In contrast, less than 0.5% of children from the bottom fifth of American families attend an elite college; less than half attend any college at all.

8   Erika Emery, "Redlining and its influence on educational opportunities in the school system", Dissertation for the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, California State University, East Bay, 2016.
    While unjust real estate practices minimized Black families' ability to access housing in particular neighborhoods, the city's physical and socio-economic decline further divided the housing market… school boundaries have created educational redlines that preserve their separate realities. Socioeconomics not only determines the neighborhoods families can access but obtaining housing in particular school zones grants our children admittance into highly sought-after schools.

9   https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion *A recent study shows that predominately nonwhite school districts receive $23 billion less funding than majority white school districts, despite serving the same number of students.*
    https://www.zipdatamaps.com/10021 *In zip code 10021 (Manhattan's Upper East Side), the average adjusted gross income is over $500,000 and the population is 80% white.*
    https://www.publicschoolreview.com/new-york/new-york/10021 *Public schools in zip code 10021 have average math and reading proficiency score of 81% and 83% respectively.*
    https://www.zipdatamaps.com/10035 *For zip code 10035 (Harlem), the average income is slightly over $50,000, and over 80% of the population identify as Black and Latinx.*
    https://www.publicschoolreview.com/new-york/new-york/10035 *Public schools in this have an average math and reading proficiency score of 32% and 38% respectively.*

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Results of a field experiment to measure racial discrimination in the labor market, based on applying with fictitious resumes to help-wanted ads in Boston and Chicago newspapers, show significant discrimination against African American names: White names receive 50% more callbacks for interviews. Having a higher quality resume, featuring more skills and experience, made a white-sounding name 30% more likely to elicit a callback, but only 9% more likely for Black-sounding names.

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Managers give women fewer challenging roles and fewer training opportunities, compared with men. For instance, female managers and midlevel workers have less access to high-level responsibilities and challenges that are precursors to promotion. Further, men are more likely to be given key leadership assignments in both male-dominated fields and female-dominated fields. This is detrimental given that challenging roles, especially developmental ones, help employees gain important skills needed to excel in their careers.

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The role of motherhood is culturally associated with reduced performance expectations and lower performance evaluations. This is referred to as the motherhood penalty. Based on a study of 700 participants, work-devoted women were viewed most favorably on work-related dimensions (i.e., commitment, dependability, likelihood to be promoted and trained) and least favorably on family-related dimensions (i.e., parental effectiveness, commitment to family) compared to their family-devoted counterparts. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that women make a trade-off when holding dual work and family roles.

24 Leanin.org, "Women are maxing out and burning out during COVID-19", https://leanin.org/article/womens-workload-and-burnout.
Among women and men who have full-time jobs, partners, and children, women are spending an average of 7.4 more hours per week than men on childcare (39.8 hours vs. 32.4 hours), and 5.3 more hours caring for elderly or sick relatives (10.4 hours vs. 5.1 hours). Most women are also spending at least 7 more hours than men on housework (57% of women are spending 21 hours or more, while 60% of men are spending 14 hours or less). That adds up to a difference of almost 20 hours per week — the equivalent of a part-time job.

25 Katie L. Badura, Emily Grijalva, Daniel A. Newman, Thomas Taiyi Yan, Gahyun Jeon and Matthew Biddle, "Gender and leadership emergence: A meta-analysis and explanatory model", Personnel Psychology Vol. 71 Issue 3, Autumn 2018.
We found showing sensitivity and concern for others — stereotypically feminine traits — made someone less likely to be seen as a leader. However, it's those same characteristics that make leaders effective. Thus, because of this unconscious bias against communal traits, organizations may unintentionally select the wrong people for leadership roles, choosing individuals who are loud and confident but lack the ability to support their followers' development and success."

26 Sonia M. Ospina and Erica G. Foldy, "Race and Leadership: Implications for Leaders of Color and Leadership Development Programs Addressing Issues of Diversity", The Research Center for Leadership in Action, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University, December 2010.
Studies of predominantly white work environments document the constraints that leaders of color face based on how they are perceived by others. This work starts from the assumption that leaders of color are disadvantaged because, for various reasons, they are not perceived as legitimate. This work suggests that when people of color are given access to leadership positions, they may still face constraints from their colleagues and subordinates due to power inequities that privilege whiteness.

27 Claire Cain Miller, "Technology's Man Problem", New York Times, April 5, 2014.
Women often take on the role of product manager, or P.M., which entails the so-called soft skills of managing people and bridging the business and engineering divide. Yet even though this is an essential job, it's the purely technical people — not the businesspeople — who get the respect in the tech industry.

28 Ryan General, "Why Asian Americans Don't Get More Leadership Roles", Nextshark, December 21, 2016.
Individuals who view Asians with their high competence and low sociability ratings would choose to avoid interacting with them. The stereotype about the "highly competent" Asians may make them appear threatening competitors at work. Meanwhile, the other Asian stereotype of being socially inept can easily be judged as a trait unfit for a leadership position.

29 Christine Silva, "Mentoring: Necessary but Insufficient for Advancement", Catalyst, Inc., December 1, 2010.
Mentors benefited men more than women even when women are mentored earlier and more often in their careers. This is in part because men secure mentors in more senior positions. But it's also because male mentors tend to sponsor rather than just mentor.

30 Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Kennedy Ihezie, "20% of White Employees Have Sponsors. Only 5% of Black Employees Do", Harvard Business Review, February 10, 2022.
Male and female managers who win sponsorship are 23% and 19% more likely respectively to progress to the next rung of the career ladder than peers who do not have sponsors. This effect is particularly applicable to Black employees, who are 65% more likely to progress if they have a sponsor. However, only 5% of up-and-coming Black employees succeed in winning sponsorship compared to 20% of their white peers.

31 Lori Nishiura Mackenzie, JoAnne Wehner, and Shelley J. Correll, "Why Most Performance Evaluations Are Biased, and How to Fix Them", Harvard Business Review, January 11, 2019.
When the context and criteria for making evaluations are ambiguous, bias is more prevalent. Without structure, people are more likely to rely on gender, race, and other stereotypes when making decisions – instead of thoughtfully constructing assessments using agreed-upon processes and criteria that are consistently applied across all employees. Lack of structure led to very different reviews that tended to advantage men, while offering women less praise and less actionable guidance to work with.

32 Nancy DiTomaso, "The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism", Russell Sage Foundation, 2013.
Most academic research, public-policy discussions and even corporate-diversity programs tend to start with the assumption that racial and other forms of inequality grow out of prejudice , bias (conscious or unconscious) and discrimination. But in a structure of inequality that already favors them, most whites do not have to do bad things to minority groups in order to gain advantages; they only have to do good things for each other, which they actively seek and do.

33 Macy Bayern, "How imposter syndrome makes the tech gender gap even worse", TechRepublic, July 11, 2019.
Imposter syndrome can easily create a vicious cycle in the minds of women in tech. Feeling outnumbered is intimidating enough, but feeling underestimated and overlooked increases those insecurities, causing women to succumb to their imposter syndrome and hold back.

34 Kate Turner, "How do men and women tackle imposter syndrome differently?", WeAreTheCity, https://wearethecity.com/how-do-men-and-women-tackle-imposter-syndrome-differently/.
More women than men experience a lack of confidence in the workplace (79% of women vs 62% of men). On top of this, 47 per cent of those women who admitted they were lacking confidence, feared that they aren't getting enough support from their manager to overcome this and dispel their feelings of imposter syndrome.

35 Christine Zekis, "Imposter Syndrome: Slaying the Beast", AfroTech Conference, https://www.afrotech.com/christine-zekis-imposter-syndrome, November 8, 2021.
People often feel self-doubt, sabotage their success, overachieve and set challenging goals when experiencing imposter syndrome. While Black professionals may experience imposter syndrome the most, the phenomenon doesn't discriminate; it can affect anyone.

36 Tara Sophia Mohr, "Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified", Harvard Business Review, August 25, 2014.
Men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them. Three barriers – believing all job qualifications were indeed requirements; reluctance to apply when anticipating failure; following guidelines for who should apply too literally - together account for 78% of women's reasons for not applying.

37 Keith Miller, "Discrimination Against Tattoos in the Workplace", https://futureofworking.com/discrimination-against-tattoos-in-the-workplace/.
31% of HR Managers say tattoos are a reason for limiting an employee's potential. Only bad breath (34%) and piercings (37%) exceeded tattoos as a negative. Most HR Managers say that all things being equal, the more "clean cut" applicant will be chosen.

38 Christy Zhou Koval and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette. "The Natural Hair Bias in Job Recruitment", Social Psychological and Personality Science Vol. 12 Issue 5, 2021.
Black women with natural hairstyles, such as curly afros, braids or twists, are often perceived as less professional than Black women with straightened hair, particularly in industries where norms dictate a more conservative appearance.

39 Maura Cheeks, "How Black Women Describe Navigating Race and Gender in the Workplace", Harvard Business Review, March 26, 2018.
Many of the women talked about having to code-switch, or embrace the dominant culture at work. Another pattern was what one of the women called "dimming my light," or dampening aspects of their personality to avoid making colleagues uncomfortable. None of the women interviewed regularly worked with other women of color.

40 Sonia Kanga, Katy DeCellesa, András Tilcsika and Sora Junb, "Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market", Administrative Science Quarterly Vol. 61 No. 3, March 17, 2016.
Thirty-six percent of interviewees (31% of Black respondents and 40% of Asian respondents) reported that they personally engaged in résumé whitening. Nearly half of those who reported personally engaging in résumé whitening had changed the presentation of their first name on their résumé. Among Asian respondents, a frequent change was to adopt a first name that was different from their legal or preferred first name. The most common technique that Black interviewees reported was to use their middle name, rather than first name, if the former sounded more "white" or "neutral" than the latter.

41 Kimmy Yam, "Americanizing Asians: The mental toll of being asked to change your name", NBC News, June 26, 2020.
We live in a world, and an educational system, that is guided by a dominant culture and is racially/culturally hierarchical. When someone in a position of power changes someone's name because they find it inconvenient or challenging to their comfort — through that interaction, they are disrespecting, devaluing who that person is. These interactions can potentially prompt those who do not come from the dominant culture to internalize the racism and believe their culture or aspects of their identity are an inconvenience, or even inferior.

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42 Laura Huang, Marcia Frideger and Jone L. Pearce, "Can Having a Foreign Accent Hurt Your Career?", Association for Psychological Science, January 15, 2014.
Business students participating in the study rated both native-born Caucasian- and Asian-American candidates as more likely to be hired than men with the foreign accents. And compared to the native English speakers, the non-native speakers were rated as weaker on political skill, regardless of their race and their rankings on communication and collaboration abilities. Participants also rated entrepreneurs with non-native accents as less politically adroit than native-accented competitors, no matter how effective they found those presenters to be at communication and collaboration.

43 Christine Ro, "The pervasive problem of 'linguistic racism'", British Broadcasting Corporation, June 3, 2021.
When English is spoken by some Europeans, they can be considered cute, sophisticated, stylish and so forth But English spoken by Asians, Africans or Middle Easterners may be viewed as challenging and unpleasant. This linguistic stereotyping applies even when those people are in fact native speakers of English. Just seeing an Asian face makes some Americans consider that speaker's English to be hard to understand, regardless of how they actually speak or where they were born.

44 Pierre Dupreelle, Gabrielle Novacek, Jeff Lindquist, Nathan Micon, Simon Pellas and Glennda Testone, "A New LGBTQ Workforce Has Arrived—Inclusive Cultures Must Follow", Boston Consulting Group, June 23, 2020.
40% of LGBTQ employees are not out at work. 36% of out employees have lied or "covered" parts of their identities at work in the past year. 54% of employees who are out at work remain closeted to their clients and customers. 75% have experienced negative day-to-day workplace interactions related to their identity. LGBTQ employees who are out at work are 2x more likely to feel psychologically safe, and 1.5x more likely to feel empowered and take creative risks

45 KC Clemens, "What Is Deadnaming?", Healthline, https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/deadnaming, October 19, 2017.
Deadnaming occurs when someone, intentionally or not, refers to a person who's transgender by the name they used before they transitioned. You may also hear it described as referring to someone by their "birth name" or their "given name." When you refer to a person who is transgender by their non-affirmed name, it can feel invalidating. It can cause them to feel like you don't respect their identity, you don't support their transition, or that you don't wish to put forth the effort to make this necessary change.

46 Sabra L. Katz-Wise, PhD, "Misgendering: What it is and why it matters", Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, July 23, 2021.
Imagine a scenario in which you are called the wrong pronoun or honorific — for example Mr., Ms., or Mrs. — multiple times a day. We know from research (KL McLemore, "A minority stress perspective on transgender individuals' experiences with misgendering", Stigma and Health Vol. 3 Issue 1, February 2018) that this is both exhausting and demoralizing. When people are misgendered, they feel invalidated and unseen. When this happens daily, it becomes a burden that can negatively impact their mental health and their ability to function in the world.

47 Christianna Silva, "Almost Every Transgender Employee Experiences Harassment or Mistreatment on the Job, Study Shows", Newsweek, November 29, 2017.
Of the 90% of transgender workers who faced discrimination at work, about a fourth were forced to use restrooms that did not match their gender identity, were told to dress, act and present as a different gender from their own in order to keep their job, or had a boss or coworker share private information about their transgender status without their permission.

48 Mary Pratt, "Changing the equation on LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion", CIO Magazine, June 30, 2021.
Melinda Briana Epler (she/her), founder and CEO of Change Catalyst, which works with organizations to build inclusive tech ecosystems, says a 2020 survey showed that 65% of nonbinary individuals experienced discrimination at work, only 46% said they felt safe and a mere 38% felt like they belonged.

49 National Center for Transgender Equality, "2015 US Transgender Study", https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS%20Full%20Report%20-%20FINAL%201.6.17.pdf.
Nearly half (46%) of respondents were verbally harassed and nearly one in ten (9%) physically attacked in the past year because of being transgender. More than 60% of transgender Americans have avoided using public restrooms for fear of confrontation, saying they have been harassed and assaulted while doing so. Nearly half (47%) of respondents were sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime and one in ten (10%) were sexually assaulted in the past year. 53% of Black respondents were sexually assaulted in their lifetime and 13% were sexually assaulted in the last year.

50 Jamilah Lim, "What's with tech companies and workplace harassment?", Techwire Asia, August 17, 2021.
48% of all women in technology experience harassment, with over three-quarters of this being sexual harassment. Just over 10% of men experience any harassment. 42% of women said their harassment was perpetrated by a supervisor. Of the women who were sexually harassed, 54% were victims of sexual assault, 35% were propositioned for sex, and 18% propositioned for sex in exchange for a promotion.

51 For legal reasons, the authors cannot share specific names of people who have committed harassment, or companies where this harassment happened. However, readers can explore the following resource - https://money.cnn.com/technology/sexual-harassment-tech/ - for stories of harassed women. Readers can also access public information on people who have committed harassment by simply typing in a person's name, their current or previous companies, and the words "harassment", "lawsuit" or "settlement" into a search engine.

52 Arielle Pardes, "Silicon Valley Ruined Work Culture", Wired, https://www.wired.com/story/how-silicon-valley-ruined-work-culture/, February 24, 2020.

Silicon Valley's biggest export is the collapsing barrier between work and life. As the boundaries between work and life become more porous, everyone works all the time. Worst of all, the tech world has managed to recast this workaholism for someone else's profit as something desirable: "hustle culture." It's replaced the 9-to-5 with "the 996"—that is, 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week.

53 Cori Johnson, "Adderall Has a Tech Industry Problem", https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/adderall-has-a-tech-industry-problem, August 11, 2014.

As performance expectations rise, deadlines tighten, and 80-hour work weeks become the norm, stress and drug addiction rates in the Valley explode. Tech loves the narrative of pushing through to a narrow victory. Look to the "10x engineer": the willingness to work longer, harder, produce capital, is prioritized above all. The cultural value derived from this investment strategy is a fetish for young, resilient bodies that bounce back from a hangover or a product launch with equal speed and vigor.

54 Melissa Santos and Rafe Colburn, "How Perks Can Divide Us" https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/how-perks-can-divide-us, June 9, 2014.

Dinner with coworkers may be great for the twenty-something, but it's also the thing that creates a bright line between the employees with families and obligations outside of work. Beer in the office is fun for some, but it can be alienating to people who don't drink, and possibly an outright hazard to recovering alcoholics or employees prone to substance abuse. Games are fairly benign, but they're also a way for people to build relationships across teams and levels in a way that can be difficult for people who don't join in those games to replicate. These perks are all too often intended to make companies appealing to candidates who are members of - one particular demographic — young, unmarried guys - and they reinforce the monoculture in our industry.

55 Laura Morgan Roberts, Anthony J. Mayo and David A. Thomas, "Race, Work, and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience", Harvard Business Press, August 13, 2019.

An assumption of the glass cliff theory is that when occupational minorities are placed in the upper echelon of organizations, their assignments are risky and will be detrimental to their professional development and advancement. Research indicates that when women and ethnic minorities are appointed to executive or corporate roles, they are more likely to find themselves on a glass cliff.

56 Nkechi Onwuameze, "Unqualified for the Job or 'Diversity Shaming?'", American Society for Public Administration, November 9, 2018.

Minority employees have long struggled to overcome the negative stereotype that they are unqualified and that their hiring was mainly to fulfill affirmative action mandates or diversity quotas. This assumption is not only false but inaccurately based on the premise that discrimination no longer exists in the hiring process. Discrimination against minority applicants and women continues to be a major issue that has generated intense debate over the years.

57 Francesca Gino, "Another Reason Top Managers Are Disproportionally White Men", Scientific American, September 12, 2017.

Specifically, ethnic minorities and women leaders are penalized when they engage in diversity-valuing behaviors—namely, hiring and promotion behaviors that promote greater demographic balance in organizations. Analyses revealed that diversity-valuing behavior was negatively related to performance ratings only for nonwhite and female leaders. To advance their own careers, these results suggest, minorities and women are forced to avoid behaviors that others might perceive as promoting greater representation of people like them.

58 Jessica Bennett, "How Not to Be 'Manterrupted' in Meetings", Time Magazine, January 20, 2015.

Male executives who speak more often than their peers are deemed more competent (by 10%), while female executives who speak up are considered less (14% less). The data follows a long line of research showing that when it comes to the workplace, women speak less, are interrupted more, and have their ideas more harshly scrutinized. And the result? Women hold back. That, or we relinquish credit altogether. Our ideas get co-opted (bro-opted), re-appropriated (bro-propriated?) — or they simply fizzle out.

59 Gilian B. White, "Black Workers Really Do Need to be Twice as Good", The Atlantic, October 7, 2015.

African American employees tend to receive more scrutiny from their bosses than their white colleagues, meaning that small mistakes are more likely to be caught, which over time leads to lower performance reviews and lower wages.

60 RC Malenka, EJ Nestler and SE Hyman, "Chapter 15: Reinforcement and Addictive Disorders". In A Sydor and RY Brown (eds.), Molecular Neuropharmacology: A Foundation for Clinical Neuroscience (2nd ed.), McGraw-Hill Medical, 2009.

61 Harvey Molotch and Laura Noren, "Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing", NYU Press, Nov 17, 2010.

62 Keya Roy, Zuheera Ali and Medha Kumar, "The racist practice of mispronouncing names", NPR Seattle, https://www.kuow.org/stories/a-rose-by-any-other-name-would-not-be-me, March 21, 2019.

The racist practice of mispronouncing names has evolved from a long history of changing people of color's names to strip them of their dignity and humanity. The changing of people's names has a racialized history. It's grounded in slavery — the renaming during slavery — renaming Americanization schools for Latinx communities and indigenous communities, and so there is a lot of history that's tied to this practice that is directly tied to racism.

About the Authors

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They are an entrepreneurial executive with proven success in defining and leading business model, product, pricing, customer, channel, sales, and marketing innovation.

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TECHPACT
Equity for All

TechPACT envisions a world where anyone with a passion for technology has the opportunity to succeed. Founded by a group of impassioned technology CxOs, TechPACT is committed to raising diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) across the technology community.

TechPACT empowers members to foster a culture of belonging by building awareness of diversity and equality opportunities and providing actionable strategies and tools to create inclusion. In their effort to expand the pipeline of diverse talent, TechPACT is inspiring youth to pursue careers in technology and providing resources to support diverse professionals throughout their careers. We support teachers and community outreach programs to enable STEAM programs and partner with organizations who are dedicated to closing the digital divide by contributing funding and/or sharing expertise.

TechPACT creates accountability through community and achieves its mission through the collective efforts of its members. Our members are a community of technology CxOs and leaders committed to making a difference. Members take "The Pledge," a personal promise to accept accountability and take action to increase representation and reduce the digital divide. TechPACT members recognize themselves as force multipliers and understand that each action they take creates an unstoppable network effect that will benefit the lives of millions across the globe.

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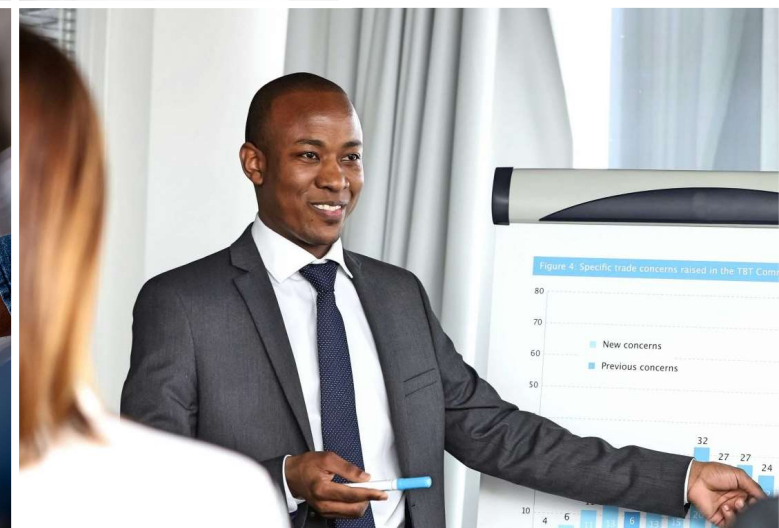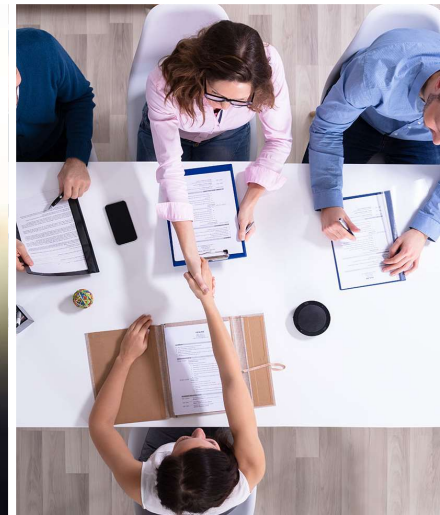
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