



Women of Color in U.S. Law Firms

Women of Color in Professional Services Series

®

catalyst

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Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business. With offices in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and more than 400 preeminent corporations as members, Catalyst is the trusted resource for research, information, and advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women's advancement with the Catalyst Award.

Women of Color in U.S. Law Firms

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Deepali Bagati

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FOREWORD

ROADBLOCKS TO INCLUSION

If you take [as your basis] that [a law firm] is white-male-centric and that women, in general, have a difficult time, then women of color will have a more difficult time. There seem to be more perceptions—either in terms of [women of color's] goals, desires, motivations, and in some cases, their abilities—that make it more difficult to navigate [the workplace] and to find people who can appreciate what [women of color] are doing. We have had a more difficult time, in terms of getting people to advance women of color.

—Senior partner, black man

The retention, development, and advancement of women and minorities is a pressing issue for law firms today as the talent pool increasingly comprises women and people of color.¹ In the past 20 years, the percentage of women entering U.S. law schools has never been lower than 40 percent.² While women of color represented nearly one-quarter of all women associates in 2008, only 1.84 percent were partners.³ Thus, it appears that many law firms are missing an opportunity to make better use of the existing talent pool.

The law firm environment is especially challenging on many levels:

- The internal accounting system of billable hours equates time with performance (i.e., more hours worked on client matters means increased revenue and better performance). This creates a special hurdle for lawyers who seek advancement while choosing to limit their work hours.
- In many firms, formal human resources practices such as performance reviews and goal setting are not evenly implemented. Instead, informal networks play a decisive role in opportunities for advancement and access to influential mentors. Lawyers from traditionally marginalized groups (e.g., women, people of color), find it especially difficult to achieve partnership in such an environment where decisions are often based on consensus within partner review committees or executive committees, rather than on more objective criteria.

While some level of natural attrition is built into the business model for law firms, losing talented lawyers is never desirable. Women continue to leave law firms at a much higher rate than men.⁴ The problem is especially pronounced among women of color—more than 75 percent of women of color associates leave their firms

1. In the 2006-2007 academic year, women made up 46.7 percent of all law school students in the United States; people of color accounted for 21.6 percent. American Bar Association, "First Year and Total J.D. Enrollment by Gender: 1947-2007," <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/charts/stats%20-%206.pdf>; American Bar Association, "First Year J.D. and Total J.D. Minority Enrollment for 1971-2007," <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/charts/stats%20-%208.pdf>.

2. American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession, *A Current Glance at Women in the Law 2007*; American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession, *Fair Measure: Toward Effective Attorney Evaluations* (August 2008).

3. NALP, "Law Firm Diversity Demographics Slow to Change—Minority Women Remain Particularly Scarce in Law Firm Partnership Ranks" (December 10, 2008), <http://www.nalp.org/lawfirmdiversity>.

4. Catalyst, *Women in Law: Making the Case* (2001).

by their fifth year of practice, and nearly 86 percent leave before their seventh year. Those who leave often report experiencing institutional discrimination and unwanted and/or unfair critical attention, which combine to create an exclusionary and challenging workplace.⁵ Other research confirms that nearly two-thirds (64.4 percent) of women of color associates left their employers within 55 months compared to just over half (54.9 percent) of women overall.⁶

According to a 2007 report from the American Bar Association, U.S. law firms “spend close to a billion dollars on training and professional development of their attorneys, and a firm’s ability to provide the highest-caliber legal service is contingent upon retaining the most talented lawyers.”⁷ In addition, a previous Catalyst study showed that when a lawyer leaves a firm, the cost to the employer is equal to—or even greater than—that person’s total annual salary and benefits.⁸

Recently, U.S. law firms have noted several trends that affect how they do business: an increasingly diverse client base; a talent pool composed of larger numbers of women and minority attorneys; and finally, the expectation that firm management pay attention to associate satisfaction and retention and proactively address diversity issues. In fact, this has already happened. According to a 2008 survey by the National Association of Women Lawyers, “Virtually all firms—including 100 percent of one-tier firms and 97 percent of two-tier firms—reported that they have women’s initiatives.”⁹

But while many firms have adopted women’s initiatives, very few concentrate on the “intersectionality” experienced by women of color in the workplace. Intersectionality refers to how different identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and class, overlap and combine, creating unique experiences of disadvantage and privilege in the workplace.¹⁰ Not acknowledging and addressing intersectionality and its impact on professional development and advancement often leads to imperfect execution of diversity programs and policies. In turn, firms may not be able to fully leverage their talent pool.¹¹

The purpose of this report is to delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of women of color working in law firms. Their accounts of stereotyping, exclusion, relationships with others, access to opportunities, and unique work-life challenges are used as a benchmark and compared to the experiences and perceptions of their colleagues (white women, men of color, and white men). As U.S. law firms continue to stress inclusion as well as diversity, we hope they will consider and act upon these findings and on the recommendations presented in Chapter 7. The desired results are twofold: to improve how women of color fare in their legal careers, and to help firms maximize the potential of all their lawyers.

5. American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession. *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms* (2006); Jill Schachner, “Early Exits,” *ABA Journal*, vol. 92, issue 8 (August 2006): p. 32-39; D.M. Osborne, “Why Are Minority Female Associates Leaving Law Firms?,” *The Minority Law Journal*, November 7 (2007); “Trading Action for Access: The Myth of Meritocracy and the Failure to Remedy Structural Discrimination,” *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 121, no. 8, (June 2008).

6. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Diversity in Law Firms* (2003).

7. American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession, *Fair Measure: Toward Effective Attorney Evaluations*, (August 2008).

8. Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Building a Business Case for Flexibility* (2005).

9. NAWL, *Report of the Third Annual National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms* (November 2008), <http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Documents/2008+Survey.pdf>.

10. Jill Schachner, “Early Exits,” *ABA Journal*, vol. 92, issue 8 (August 2006): p. 32-39; Katherine Giscombe, *Women of Color in Accounting* (Catalyst, 2007): p. 4.

11. Katherine Giscombe, *Women of Color in Accounting*, (Catalyst, 2007); Deepali Bagati, *Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms* (Catalyst, 2008).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Since 1997, Catalyst has released several reports on how people of color navigate the professional workplace. Our groundbreaking research has drawn attention to how experiences and perceptions among women of color in particular (Asian women, black women, and Latinas) differ from those of white women. We have also looked at differences between women from different racial/ethnic groups.¹²

Previous Catalyst research into the experiences of women lawyers has resulted in a number of important findings:¹³

- Surveys found that women lawyers intended to stay with their current firms for fewer years compared to their male colleagues. Younger women and women of color said they planned to leave even sooner than women lawyers overall.
- White women were more likely than women of color to report satisfaction with their firms.
- Both white women and women of color were more likely to perceive personal/family commitment as a barrier to advancement in their law firms.
- Women lawyers perceived existing flexibility options within law firms as detrimental to their careers.

The *Women of Color in Professional Services Series* has already looked at the situation of women of color working in U.S. accounting and financial services firms; this report focuses on law firms. All these sectors are distinguished by a client-service focus and by historically entrenched “old boys” networks that make inclusion of “outsider groups” such as women of color extremely difficult.

Building on prior Catalyst research, this study explores how women of color (mainly associates) working in law firms experienced and perceived various aspects of their current jobs: workplace culture, the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion efforts, job satisfaction, intent to leave, work-life needs and challenges, and relationships with influential others (supervising attorneys, mentors, and informal networks).

12. Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management Series* (1997-2004).

13. Catalyst, *Women in Law: Making the Case* (2001); Catalyst, *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt: Building the Business Case for Flexibility*, (2005); Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Creating Opportunities for Better Balance* (2005); Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Lawyers State Their Case on Job Flexibility* (2006).

More specifically, we examined the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender among lawyers in a sample of the top 25 U.S. law firms (ranked by revenue). For the purposes of this research, we have used white male lawyers as our dominant comparison group, since white men continue to occupy most senior positions in U.S. law firms. We made a number of comparisons:¹⁴

- The experiences and perceptions of women of color were compared to those of white women (with whom women of color share gender).
- We also compared their experiences and perceptions to those of men of color (with whom women of color share race/ethnicity).
- Where relevant and statistically significant, we also reported on comparisons between lawyers of color (women and men) and white lawyers (women and men).

Such analysis allows us to highlight how substantively distinct experiences—and related disadvantages in professional development and advancement—might result from a combination of identities for women of color.

APPROACH: INTERSECTIONALITY

In today's workplace, disadvantages and privilege play out in a subtle fashion and are often embedded in the daily practices of work. These differences influence how employees perceive their organizations; they also guide certain behaviors.¹⁵

Intersectionality is an analytical approach for understanding how each person's various identities—such as gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and class—overlap and combine. As they overlap, identities contribute to unique experiences of disadvantage and privilege. Because different identities interact and mutually shape one another, they should never be studied in isolation. Intersectionality clarifies experiences that cannot be explained by one identity alone.¹⁶

*[Intersectionality] starts from the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structures of power. People are members of more than one community at the same time and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege.*¹⁷

The complexity of intersecting identities should drive change efforts away from the “one-size-fits-all” approach to diversity and inclusion and toward a more nuanced understanding of what it takes to fully include women of color.

14. Statistical procedures include chi-square tests of significance, custom tables, and analysis of variance. Unless otherwise specified, findings are significant at $p < .05$ level.

15. Irene Browne and Joya Misra, “The Intersection of Gender and Race in the Labor Market,” *Annual Review Sociology*, vol. 29 (2003): p. 487-513.

16. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), “Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice,” *Women's Rights and Economic Change*, vol. 9 (August, 2004): p. 1–8.

17. AWID, p. 2.

Study Sample Snapshot

- A total of 1,242 lawyers responded to the Catalyst survey. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviews with senior partners in a subsample of participating firms. We also conducted focus groups with women of color—including Asian women, black women, and Latinas—working in these firms. For more detail on the study sample, see below or refer to the Technical Appendices.
- Women of color made up 19.8 percent of the total sample. This group was composed of 41.9 percent Asian women, 28.4 percent black women, 17.1 percent Latinas, and 12.6 percent “other.”¹⁸
- Most of the lawyers were at the associate level (approximately 82 percent). Equity partners made up the next largest group (approximately 10 percent).
- Most of the lawyers—between 68 and 75 percent—worked in Litigation or Corporate practice areas.
- Women of color respondents (42.9 percent) were more likely than white women (31.7 percent) to report being single. Black women were more likely to be single than Asian women and Latinas.
- White women (30.6 percent) were more likely than women of color (28.8 percent) to report having children under age 18 still living at home.
- Women (41.8 percent) were more likely than men (31.9 percent) to report having primary responsibility for dependent care.
- White women (6.96 years) reported the longest tenure at their firms, followed by white men (4.93 years), women of color (3.55 years), and men of color (3.49 years).

Findings at a Glance

- Our study found that people of color working in law firms perceived and experienced an exclusionary work culture.
- Of all demographic groups, women of color were most likely to report racial/ethnic stereotyping in the workplace.
- Women of color also felt overlooked by diversity efforts and perceived “imperfect execution” of diversity efforts aimed at creating an inclusive workplace. They also perceived a lack of accountability for diversity efforts in their firms and inadequate training of supervising attorneys in dealing with a diverse workforce.
- In addition, women of color had unique needs and faced different challenges regarding work-life quality compared to white women.
- On the other hand, there is evidence that law firms have made some progress toward creating an inclusive workplace for white women: these lawyers said they felt included in decision-making at their firms. They also reported feeling satisfied with the support they received from supervising attorneys.
- White women were also most likely to report that their careers had benefited from mentoring relationships. In addition, white women were more likely than women of color to report conversations with those senior to them and with other whites in their firms.

18. Although this report does not provide detail about specific racial/ethnic groups, it does highlight general findings driven by a particular racial/ethnic group. More in-depth analysis regarding specific racial/ethnic groups within women of color (black women, Asian women, and Latinas) will be provided in subsequent reports.

Women of Color Uniquely Disadvantaged by the Intersection of Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Figure 1 summarizes the factors or attributes that serve to disadvantage all women lawyers in general, lawyers of color (both women and men), and women of color in particular. In addition to barriers encountered by people of color (left column) and women (right column), women of color said they faced added barriers—some specific to their group, some similar to barriers faced by others but which they felt affected them to a greater degree (middle column). Barriers listed in the middle of the figure were not encountered by men of color or by white women to the same extent as they were by women of color.

Such barriers pose severe challenges to women of color trying to fit into their organizations and to forge positive relationships with influential others. As a result, their development and advancement in the relationship-based, client-service environment of law firms is often compromised.

Figure 1: Disadvantages Based on Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and the Intersection of Race and Gender

PEOPLE OF COLOR	WOMEN OF COLOR	WOMEN
<p>Less likely to feel included in decision-making.</p> <p>Overall exclusivity of work environment due to perceived racial stereotyping.</p> <p>Overall higher intent to leave*</p> <p>Overall dissatisfaction with equity and opportunity, and with business development opportunities.</p> <p>Overall dissatisfaction with supervisory support, managers' intent to help in understanding the politics of the workplace, and managers' fairness in performance evaluation.</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with overall access to and support from informal networks.</p> <p>Cited lack of similar role models, lack of informal networking with influential colleagues as barriers to advancement.</p> <p>Cited challenges in understanding organizational politics, unwritten rules and norms.</p> <p>Cited lack of influential mentors among those with mentors.</p> <p>Less likely to speak to whites* and also to those at more senior levels.</p> <p>Perceived work-life resources as lacking sensitivity in dealing with diverse people.</p>	<p>More likely to experience exclusion from other employees, racial and gender stereotyping.</p> <p>Most likely to feel it necessary to make adjustment to fit in.</p> <p>Most likely to seriously consider leaving the firm.</p> <p>Cited dissatisfaction with current level of work relative to years of experience.</p> <p>Cited dissatisfaction with access to high-profile client assignments and with the distribution of important client engagements.</p> <p>Cited lack of candid and constructive feedback as a barrier to advancement.</p> <p>Perceived lack of commitment from senior leadership toward promoting diverse candidates.</p> <p>Less likely to aspire to partnership.</p> <p>Less likely to speak to men in the firm.</p>	<p>Experienced sexist comments in the workplace.</p> <p>Cited lack of support from firm to manage work and personal responsibilities.</p> <p>More likely to cite childcare responsibilities as a challenge to achieving work-life effectiveness.</p>

*This finding is significant at $p < .1$.

Lawyers of color (both women and men) were more likely than white lawyers to feel challenged in forging relationships with influential others, including their supervising attorneys. They also reported having limited access to and support from informal networks. They felt less included in decision-making and did not believe they could challenge the way things were done in their firms. Not surprisingly, these lawyers were more likely than white lawyers to state an intention to leave their firms. Women of color were most likely to be seriously considering leaving their firms. Finally, of all groups surveyed, women of color were most likely to perceive negative stereotyping; they were also most likely to say it they found it challenging to fit into their firms' environment.

We found evidence that the development and advancement of women of color was further compromised by lack of access to business development opportunities and important client engagements, and by low expectations among supervising attorneys regarding the performance of women of color. These findings will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Some of the difficulty reported by women of color appears related to the "imperfect execution" of diversity efforts within their firms. The data suggest that senior leaders in law firms must play a more active role in creating inclusive work environments. In Chapter 7, we suggest possible solutions for firms and provide examples by describing some successful diversity and inclusion programs.

CHAPTER 2: MOVING FROM DIVERSITY TO INCLUSION

Findings at a Glance

- Women of color were most likely to perceive imperfect execution of diversity efforts in creating an inclusive work environment within their firms.
 - Women of color, followed by men of color, were most likely to report that diversity efforts failed to address subtle racial biases in their workplaces.
 - Women lawyers, and women of color in particular, were significantly more likely than men to perceive that current diversity efforts in their firms were ineffective in addressing gender bias.
 - Women of color were most likely to report that current diversity efforts placed too little emphasis on the quality of the work environment.
- Women of color, followed by white women and men of color, were least likely to believe their firms' leaders demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity by placing qualified women and racial/ethnic minorities in leadership positions.
- A minority of those surveyed (between 13 and 21 percent across demographic groups) believed that supervising attorneys in their firms were actually held accountable for developing and advancing women and racial/ethnic minorities.
 - Lawyers of color were significantly less likely than white lawyers to believe that supervising attorneys in their firms were held accountable for developing and advancing people from these groups.
- A limited number of survey respondents (between 10 and 19 percent across demographic groups) believed that supervising attorneys in their firms received adequate training for managing a diverse workforce.

Previous research shows that women of color in professional services firms—including law firms—cite a number of barriers to their advancement. These include subtle discriminatory practices surrounding compensation and allocation of assignments, stereotyping, and double standards in performance reviews.¹⁹ How people from outsider groups—such as women of color—perceive and experience a particular workplace (e.g., whether it feels welcoming or not) is important. Such perceptions and experiences play a critical role both in how committed these workers feel to their employers and in how long they intend to stay. Research also shows that diversity initiatives regarded as effective by targeted groups can have a positive impact on employees' commitment to an employer and on their intent to remain with the firm.²⁰

19. Katherine Giscombe, *Women of Color in Accounting*, (Catalyst, 2007); Deepali Bagati, *Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms* (Catalyst, 2008); American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession, *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms* (2006).

20. Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Three Years Later* (2002); Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers* (1999); Deepali Bagati, *Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms* (Catalyst, 2008).

In this chapter, we report that women of color at top U.S. law firms were more likely than other demographic groups to feel that their firms' diversity and inclusion efforts were not effective in meeting their needs. This suggests that progress from diversity to inclusion has been slow. Because women and people of color are often targeted by diversity and inclusion efforts, imperfect execution of these initiatives may mean that employees—and firms—are not fully benefiting from good organizational intentions. The following quotations emphasize how diversity efforts are perceived by those targeted by such programs:

One thing that's always annoyed me about diversity initiatives is that they are always directed at minorities...So the minorities get together, and they discuss that they're diverse...We need more events where they sit the white partners down and force them to watch presentations or something.

—Asian woman

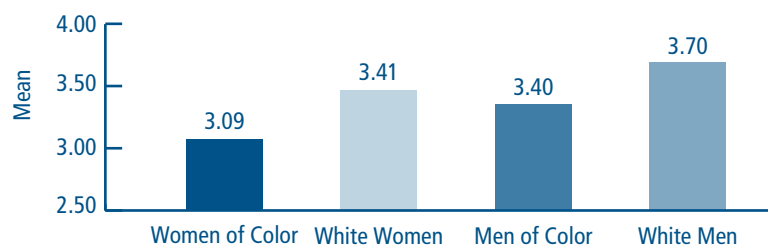
[Regarding diversity efforts,] the answer used to be, try to educate people, make them more open-minded. But now, you have an ultimatum: "Why aren't you giving this [woman of color] work?" Or, how about: "I know you have a lot going on right now, and I know this person is not busy at all. I'm going to make you work with this person." I'm almost to the point where I feel like there needs to be a lack of choice in certain situations.

—Black woman

WOMEN OF COLOR LEAST LIKELY TO BELIEVE DIVERSITY PRACTICES ARE EFFECTIVE

Although more than 80 percent of survey respondents reported that their law firms had diversity efforts aimed at supporting racial/ethnic minorities and women, women of color were least likely to believe that these programs were actually effective in creating an inclusive workplace (see Figure 2).²¹ Here the mean score for each demographic group is presented, reflecting perceptions about the effectiveness of organizational diversity practices in the workplace. The higher the score is, the greater the perceptions of effectiveness.

Figure 2: Overall Perceived Effectiveness of Organizational Diversity Practices



21. See Technical Appendix B for a description of measures making up this index and its reliability.

Furthermore, people of color were significantly more likely than whites to agree that diversity efforts placed too little emphasis on the quality of the work environment. Notably, one-third of women of color agreed with this statement (see Figure 3).

People from the top, if they would understand [a little bit]...the challenges [facing] women of color, they might be more open to being inclusive rather than exclusive.

—Asian woman

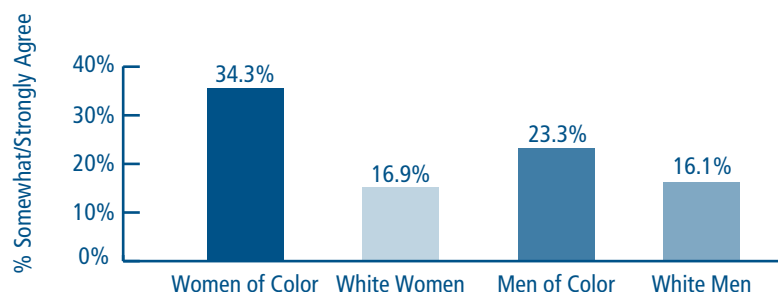
[The partners] are largely white [and male] and tend to seek out white [male] associates to work with them. I don't think it's always conscious. I think it's just that the person who comes to mind for an assignment is not as often a woman of color.

—Black woman

I think the white guy is the best, white woman is next best, and then minority guy, and then minority girl. And that's, you know, the comfort level in terms of seats at the [ball] game.

—Latina

Figure 3: "Diversity Efforts Place Too Little Emphasis on the Quality of the Work Environment."

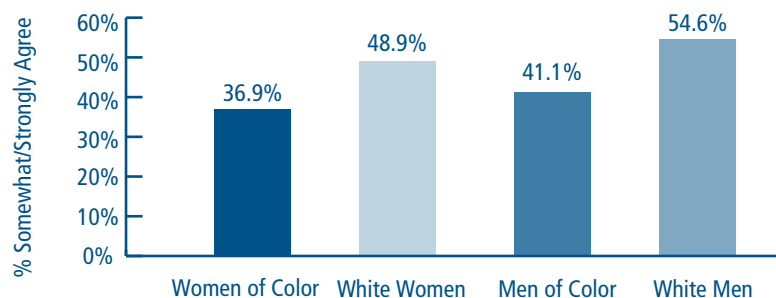


WOMEN OF COLOR MOST LIKELY TO PERCEIVE LIMITED SENIOR LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

More than 60 percent of respondents across all demographic groups perceived that senior leaders at their firms were committed to hiring qualified, diverse candidates (women of color, 63.6 percent; white women, 67.7 percent; men of color, 70.5 percent; white men, 75.5 percent). However, women of color were least likely of all groups to perceive senior leadership support in hiring qualified, diverse candidates.

As shown in Figure 4, women of color were also least likely to believe senior leaders at their firms demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity by placing qualified women and racial/ethnic minorities in leadership positions. White women and men of color were also less likely than white men to hold such beliefs. Here the mean score for each demographic group is presented, reflecting perceptions about whether senior management is committed to diversity. The higher the score is, the greater the perception of managerial commitment.

Figure 4: "Senior Leadership Demonstrates Commitment to Diversity by Placing Qualified Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Leadership Positions."



Everything needs to be more transparent... just in terms of giving out assignments, evaluations, etc. I think there's constantly the sense that as women of color associates, we don't know where we stand as individuals or as a group at the firm... Those concerns need to be taken seriously, and the firm needs to really look at why it is that we have so many women of color associates, and [why] not a single one of us can identify a senior woman of color.

—Black woman

These findings highlight the fact that, while many U.S. law firms have addressed barriers to the recruitment and entry of people of color and women, once these lawyers are inside their firms, they perceive internal barriers to advancement. Women in general, and women of color in particular, feel that existing diversity efforts are simply not effective.

WOMEN OF COLOR MOST LIKELY TO FEEL THAT DIVERSITY EFFORTS DO NOT ADDRESS RACIAL/ETHNIC AND GENDER BIASES

Perceptions About Racial/Ethnic Biases

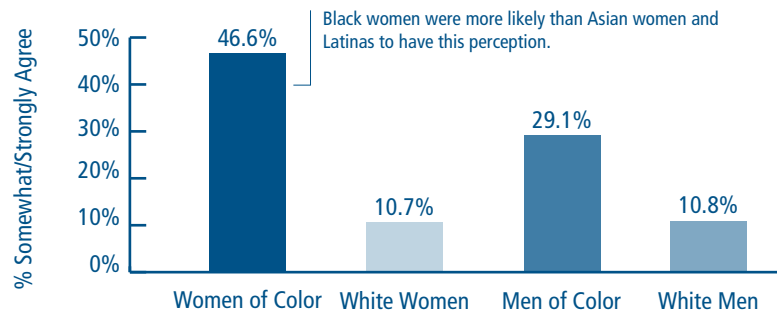
Stereotyping and hidden biases in the workplace still make it difficult for people of color to feel they “fit” into their organizations; such biases also make it harder for people of color to develop important working relationships.²²

Women of color respondents were most likely to state that diversity efforts at their firms had failed to address subtle racial biases in the workplace. Men of color were also much more likely than their white colleagues (both women and men) to feel this way. Furthermore, among women of color, black women were more likely to report this perception than Asian women and Latinas.²³ This finding strongly suggests that diversity policies and programs in many U.S. law firms have not successfully filtered down to lawyers from certain racial/ethnic minority groups, and especially not to women of color.

22. Katherine Gismombe, *Women of Color in Accounting* (Catalyst, 2007).

23. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: black women, 62.3 percent; Asian women, 41.1 percent; Latinas, 40.5 percent.

Figure 5: "Diversity Efforts Fail to Address Subtle Racial Bias."



The following quotation from a senior partner highlights the double standards still prevalent in many law firms:

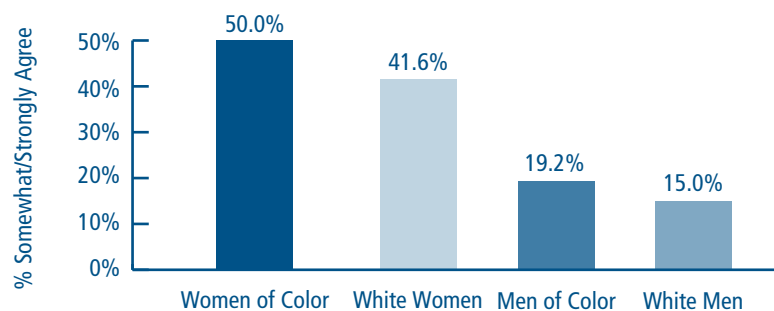
I think [that] racially diverse lawyers...[are] held to a higher standard. In other words, if they start work and make a mistake, then people won't use them anymore and will say, "They're not good. Their skills are not good." Whereas if a white male lawyer makes mistake[s], he is given more opportunities to correct them and [this] won't be held against the white male lawyer as readily as against the diverse lawyer.

—Senior partner, white man

Perceptions About Gender Biases

Women lawyers were significantly more likely than men in their firms to feel that current efforts to reduce gender bias—including subtle forms of sexism—in their firms were not effective. Among women lawyers, those of color were most likely to perceive gender biases in the workplace (see Figure 6). In particular, 50 percent of women of color reported that such efforts were not effective, compared to 41.6 percent of white women. This finding suggests that the sexism experienced by women lawyers in general is more acutely perceived by women of color. There seems to be a synergistic effect at work: that is, being racially/ethnically different magnifies the disadvantages women experience because of their gender.

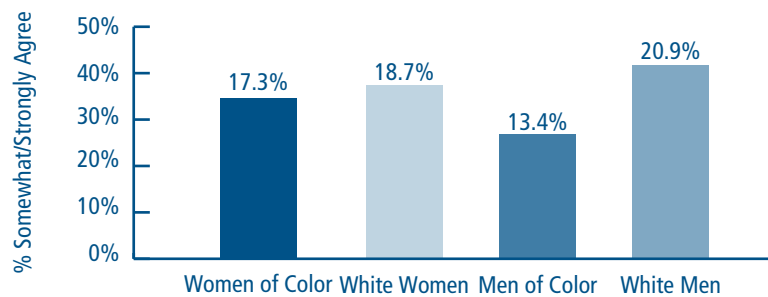
Figure 6: "Diversity Efforts Fail to Address Subtle Gender Bias."



LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND INADEQUATE TRAINING OF SUPERVISING ATTORNEYS

Catalyst has learned from its experiences working with businesses and professions²⁴ that accountability is critical for the long-term sustainability and success of any initiative. In general, our survey found that a relatively small percentage of lawyers across demographic groups—between 13 and 21 percent—believed that supervising attorneys in their firms were currently being held accountable for developing and advancing women and racial/ethnic minorities (see Figure 7). People of color were significantly less likely than whites to believe that such accountability existed within their organizations. It is possible that feelings of exclusion among individuals may be magnified by a perception that the internal advancement of diverse candidates remains problematic, even though senior leaders have demonstrated a commitment to diverse recruitment and hiring.

Figure 7: "Supervisors Are Held Accountable for the Development and Advancement of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities."

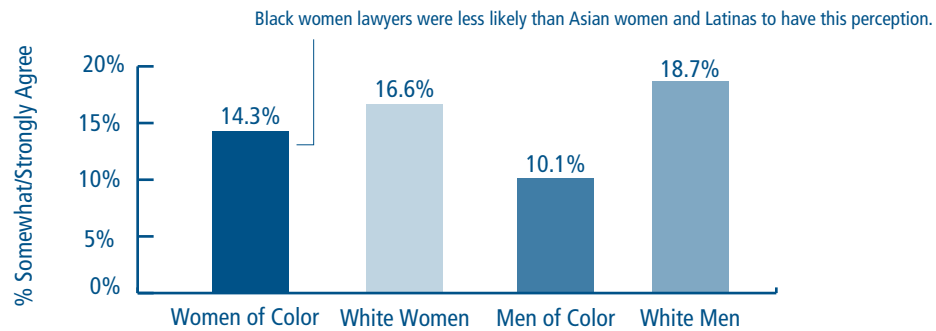


Not surprisingly, a limited number of respondents—between 10 and 19 percent—believed that supervising attorneys in their firms had received adequate training for managing a diverse workforce (see Figure 8). Lawyers of color were significantly less likely than their white colleagues to hold this belief; among women of color, black women were less likely than Asian women and Latinas to feel that supervising attorneys at their firms had received adequate training.²⁵

24. This includes Advisory Services and Catalyst Award activities. Criteria for the Catalyst Award include four important dimensions—senior leadership commitment, communication, accountability, and business case—essential for sustainable organizational change. Additional criteria for the Catalyst Award include measurable results, originality, and replicability.

25. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: Latinas, 19.4 percent; Asian women, 14.8 percent; black women, 11.3 percent.

Figure 8: "Managers Receive Adequate Training About How to Manage a Diverse Workforce."



The law firm work environment sets the context for the experiences of women of color. While employees entering organizations must adapt to existing organizational norms to stay employed, those from outsider groups, such as women of color, often feel excluded from the inner workings of the organization, despite their efforts to fit in. In the next chapter we explore perceptions and experiences among women of color who reported feeling excluded from their workplace environments.

CHAPTER 3: EXCLUSIONARY WORK CULTURE

Findings at a Glance

- Lawyers of color reported experiencing an exclusionary work environment; women of color were most likely to experience this exclusion.
 - People of color were significantly less likely than whites to believe that racial/ethnic differences were appreciated in their organizations.
 - People of color felt less included in decision-making and were less likely than their white colleagues to challenge how things were done in their firms.
- Lawyers of color were significantly more likely than whites to report encountering racial/ethnic stereotypes at their firms; women of color were most likely to report such stereotyping.
- Women lawyers were significantly more likely than men to report being subject to sexist comments in the workplace.
- People of color were significantly more likely than whites to agree that many employees in their firms seemed uncomfortable around members of their racial/ethnic group; women of color were most likely to agree with this statement.
- Women of color were significantly more likely than white women, men of color, and white men to report making adjustments to fit in at their firms.

Previous research has found that professional women and racial/ethnic minorities were more likely to feel excluded in their workplaces, which in turn leads to job dissatisfaction and a lower sense of well-being. Those who were most dissatisfied said they did not intend to stay with their organizations.

Lack of organizational “fit” is one reason women of color may decide to leave their current employers:

There’s one [woman of color] who left at the end of her first year. [She] was really an outstanding person...[but] she never could find a foothold [in her section]...I remember a [colleague] saying, “Well, you know, she just doesn’t fit in.” That was just sort of a code... People really didn’t know who she was...She was probably a little quieter than most. But she was a really smart person and, frankly, [she] never really had a chance to prove herself.

—Senior partner, black man

26. Michal. E. Mor Barak and Amy C. Levin, “Outside of the Corporate Mainstream and Excluded From the Work Community: A Study of Diversity, Job Satisfaction, and Well-Being,” *Community, Work, & Family*, vol. 5, no. 2 (August 2002): p. 133-157; Glen D. Moyes, Patricia A. Williams, and Behnaz Z. Quigley, “The Relation Between Perceived Treatment Discrimination and Job Satisfaction Among African-American Accounting Professionals,” *Accounting Horizons*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 2000): p. 21-48.

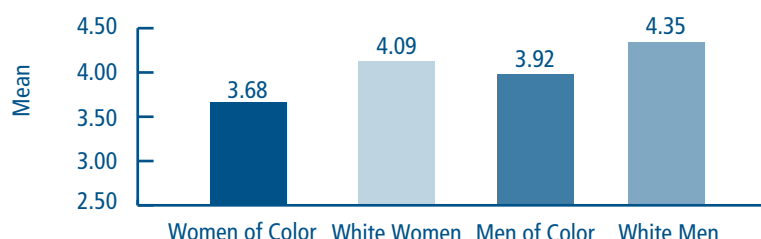
I think the biggest factor for attorney[s] of color is feeling comfortable that they really do have a future in the organization...When they look around and don't see a lot of people who look like them who have made it to the partner ranks, they just perceive barriers.

—Senior partner, white woman

PEOPLE OF COLOR PERCEIVED A LESS OPEN AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

The Catalyst study used an “inclusivity index” to assess lawyers’ perceptions of openness at their law firms. The index included questions on lawyers’ perceptions of stereotyping, decision-making, and fitting into their firms.²⁷ We found that both women and men of color rated their workplaces as less open and inclusive than white women and men did (see Figure 9). Here the mean score for each demographic group is presented, reflecting perceptions of inclusion and openness in the workplace. The higher the score is, the greater the perceptions of openness.

Figure 9: Overall Perceptions of Inclusion and Openness in the Workplace



The following quotations illustrate the kind of exclusion perceived by women of color:

The good old boy network still exists...“I’m going to tap old Charlie, and we’re going to go off and play golf, and we’re going to be great.” I’ve been here some time, and I see it more and more as I get higher up. It’s frustrating because I know my skill level, I know my personality, I know that I would be a good person to bring in front of clients.

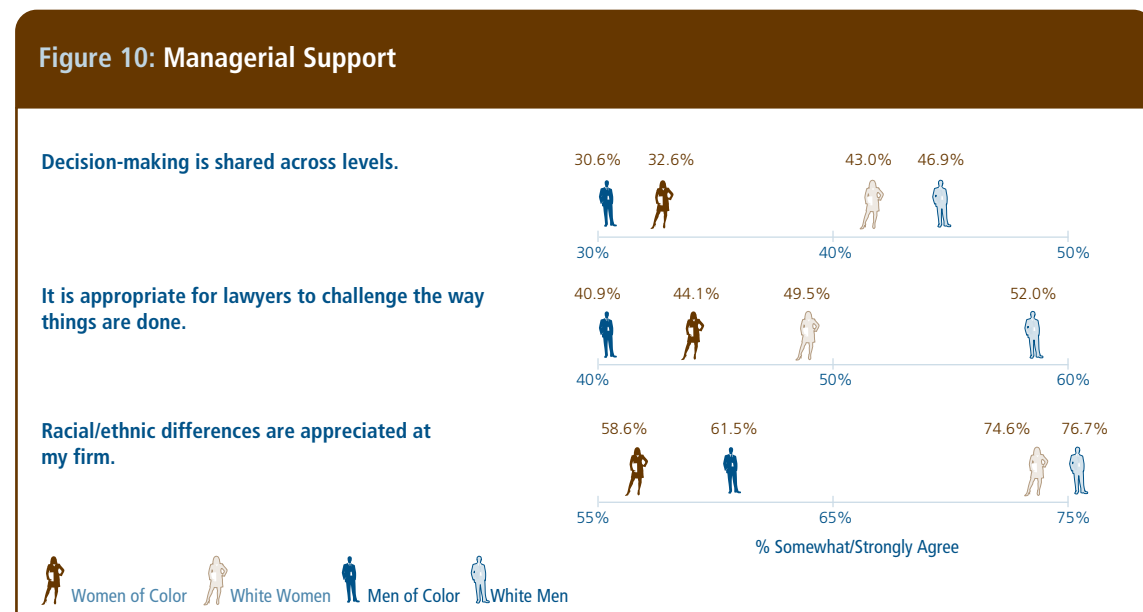
—Black woman

[The firm has] to give people the opportunity. If the person isn’t competent, fine. Then say it. But give the person the opportunity...I’ve had to fight to get opportunities to work on a deal...Why do I need to beg to be staffed?

—Latina

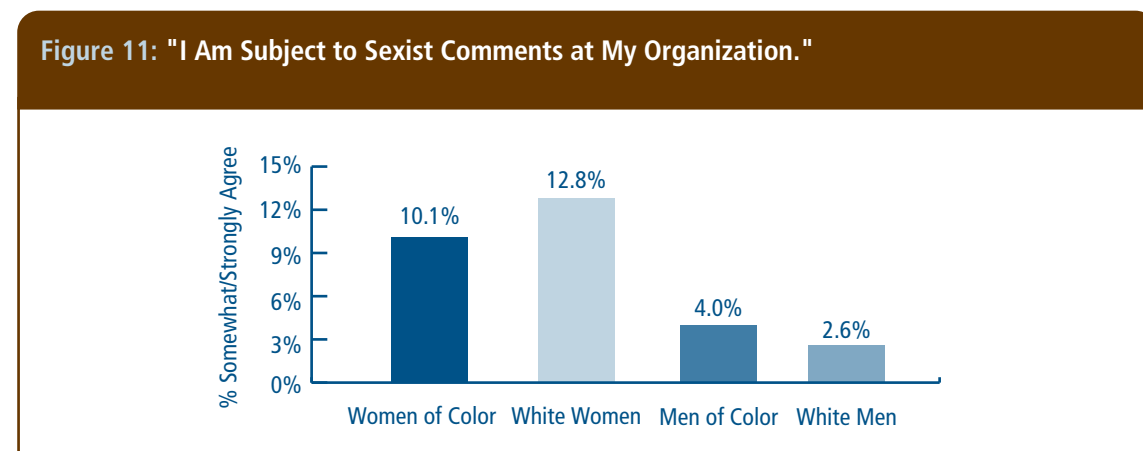
27. See Technical Appendix B for a description of measures making up the inclusivity index and its reliability.

The survey found that people of color were significantly less likely than whites to agree that specific aspects of their work environments reflected inclusivity (see Figure 10).



WOMEN OF COLOR MOST LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE STEREOTYPING

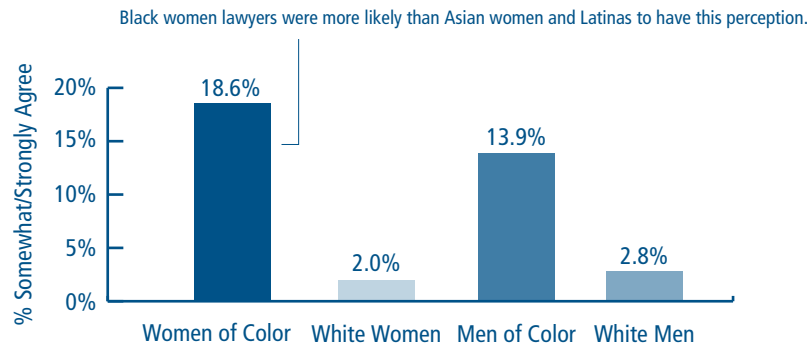
Prior Catalyst research has shown that racial/ethnic and gender stereotyping in the workplace makes it challenging for women and people of color to feel they fit in and to forge useful professional relationships.²⁸ According to our survey of lawyers, women were significantly more likely than men to say they had experienced sexist comments in the workplace (see Figure 11).



28. Katherine Giscombe, *Women of Color in Accounting*, (Catalyst, 2007); Deepali Bagati, *Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms* (Catalyst, 2008).

Perceived exposure to racial/ethnic stereotyping was significantly more common among women of color (18.6 percent), followed by men of color (13.9 percent). (See Figure 12.) Black women were most likely to perceive racial/ethnic stereotyping, followed by Latinas and Asian women.²⁹ Fewer than 3 percent of white lawyers reported such exposure.

Figure 12: "I Am Subject to Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes at My Organization."



The following quotations illustrate the stereotyping perceived by women belonging to specific racial/ethnic groups:

Specific to Asians in the workplace, I just get the sense that they're pigeonholed in a way as being diligent, but they probably won't advance...[They] are maybe not as aggressive or more of a wallflower, [so] surely they couldn't develop business. I think a big challenge for us is to overcome that stereotyping.

—Asian woman

Any white woman has faced [stereotyping], but they're not seen as threatening. No, they're seen as emotional. When we get angry, it's like, "Call security...[We're] taking it to another level." Whereas a white woman, [it's] like "Oh, she's a B."

—Black woman

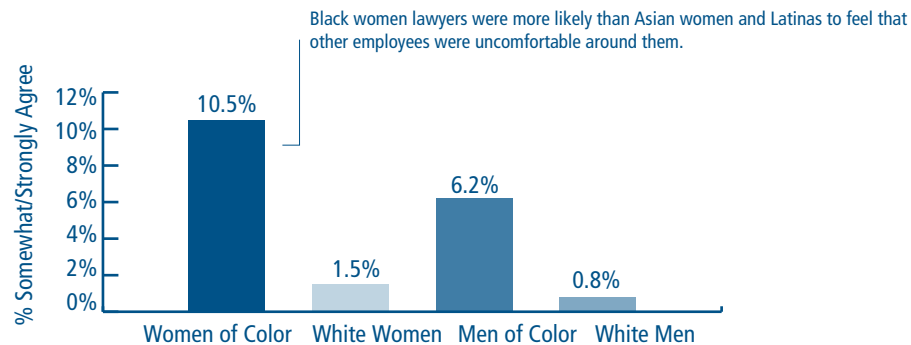
WOMEN OF COLOR MOST LIKELY TO PERCEIVE THAT OTHERS FELT UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND THEM

As shown in Figure 13, lawyers of color were significantly more likely than whites to agree that many employees appeared to feel uncomfortable around members of their racial/ethnic group. Women of color were most likely to have this perception; among women of color, black women were most likely to perceive feelings of discomfort among other employees.³⁰

29. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: black women, 23.1 percent; Latinas, 19.5 percent; Asian women, 16.7 percent.

30. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: black women, 15.4 percent; Asian women, 9.8 percent; Latinas, 9.8 percent.

Figure 13: "Many Employees Feel Uncomfortable Around Members of My Racial/Ethnic Group."



The following quotations illustrate how the perceived discomfort of other employees could manifest in a lack of opportunities for women of color:

I'm concerned about the wealth of knowledge that I've built up. And so I think a lot [about this]...There are just one or two people [who] are really invested in you and invested in your development. And so now that I kind of figured this out and figured out how to play the game, I'm playing the game. It's just like these white males don't want to work with me, [so] I'm going to work with people who want to [work with me]. And somehow, some way I'm going to find a connection with [the white males]. I'm going to work twice as hard as old boy Charlie.

—Black woman

I get this sense that people discount you even before they know you. People are more apt to give...the best assignments to, or mentor people [who] are more like them.

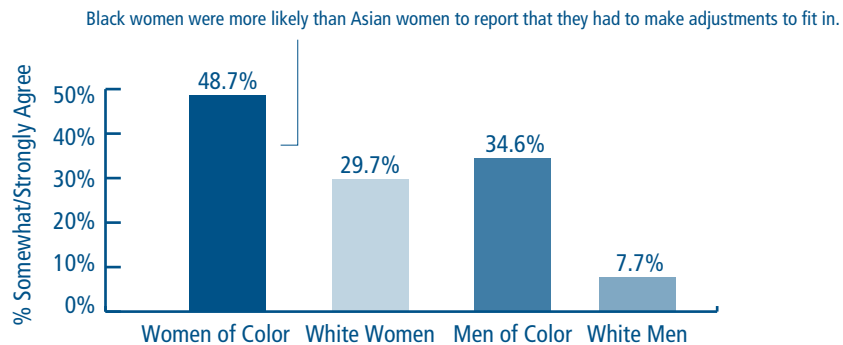
—Asian woman

WOMEN OF COLOR MOST LIKELY TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS IN ORDER TO FIT IN

Women of color were significantly more likely than white women, men of color, and white men to report making adjustments to fit in at their firms (see Figure 14). Among women of color, black women were more likely than Asian women to report making such adjustments.³¹

31. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: black women, 65.6 percent; Latinas, 46.3 percent; Asian women, 41.2 percent.

Figure 14: "I Have to Make Adjustments to Fit In."



[To fit in] I guess you [just] have to appear more...for lack of a better word...more WASP-ish in a way. It's weird because when you're growing up, you hang out with people in high school, college, and throughout [who] are more like you. And then you come here and there are not as many minorities, so you have to make that adjustment as you start hanging out with...white people, and you...have to make that effort to appear more like the majority.

—Asian woman

I try to behave as American as I can. And I try to hide [my Latin heritage]...Not that I can hide [it], because every time I open my mouth, [it is obvious] who I am...Why do I need to change my personality? [I am] working 15 hours a day and on top of that I have to change my personality?

—Latina

[Regarding fit], I think a lot of it is your ability to be really comfortable with the team that you're working with. [I think] we have to kind of break [the] ice and make things comfortable, because I think an old white male, stepping...into a room, and us sitting together...anything I say is going to be offensive. Even if it's not.

—Black woman

It should be clear from the findings presented in this chapter that women of color respondents perceived and experienced their workplaces as exclusionary. In the next chapter, we delve into how women of color perceived workplace relationships, which are known to be vital for lawyers' development and advancement.

CHAPTER 4: “WHO YOU KNOW” CONSIDERED CRITICAL FOR ADVANCEMENT

Findings at a Glance

- Women and men of color were significantly less likely than white lawyers to report overall satisfaction with the support received from their supervising attorneys.
- A high proportion of survey respondents reported having a mentor in their firms. Although women of color were most likely to say they had a mentor, they were also most likely to perceive that their mentors lacked influence within the firm.
 - Women of color were significantly less likely than white women to report satisfaction with coaching from their mentors aimed at helping them become more politically savvy within the firm.
 - Even when women of color had white mentors and/or male mentors, they were significantly more likely than white lawyers to perceive that their mentors lacked influence within the firm.
 - White women were most likely to feel they benefited from mentoring relationships with white mentors. They described such benefits as: trust and mutual respect; being helped to better navigate the firm environment; and coaching aimed at helping them become more politically savvy in the firm.
- Lawyers of color were significantly less likely than white lawyers to be satisfied with overall access to and support from informal networks. This lack of satisfaction revolved around access to informal networks of influential colleagues, knowing what was “really” going on in their firms, and interacting informally with a partner in the previous two months (i.e., having a meal together).
- Women of color were significantly less likely than white women to speak with those senior to them within the firm and also to speak to men and white colleagues in general.
 - White women reported speaking to the widest range of people, suggesting they felt they had greater access to a variety of people in their firms who could provide help and information.

In the relationship-based environment of law firms, “who you know” appears to have a major impact on job-related decisions and interactions. These include: staffing on important client engagements, getting high-visibility assignments, having access to critical information, and taking advantage of professional development opportunities. U.S. law firms are currently dominated by white males, and our findings strongly suggest that women of color still face barriers in developing relationships with influential others in the workplace. This is likely to have a negative impact on their professional development and advancement within their firms.

In this chapter, we draw attention to how women of color experienced their relationships with supervising attorneys, mentors, and colleagues. We also point out the potential negative impact on career advancement when such relationships are less than optimal. The following quotations from several senior partners illustrate the importance of relationships in a law firm setting:

The relationship piece is so very important, and [women, including women of color] often focus, rightly so, on the work. It is navigating both of those issues that’s often the important piece...In both of those cases, I think [women of color] lack the relationships needed to sort of overcome the perceptions, stereotypes, et cetera.

—Senior partner, black man

It’s easier for whoever it is that’s handing out the work...and safer for them to call upon the people [who] are like them. And to that extent, it may take longer for the attorney of color to get into the work flow and to gain the confidence of those who are responsible for handing out the work, simply because they look different than the stereotypical associates.

—Senior partner, white woman

Everybody’s really smart, and everybody’s a star in some respect. [It is about] how you get into the flow of work. How do you get into the core of business at the firm? How do you get and become controllers of key clients? That’s the hard part. The most difficult thing for a woman of color is to get in a position of controlling key business, such that...making partner becomes a necessity...Usually, when a woman of color comes up [for partnership], it’s like, “Oh, yeah, her work is good, but she doesn’t have the strongest relationships.” She doesn’t have all the client contacts because, frankly, partners determine when they want to give away a client. They are literally bestowing or bequeathing, and that happens a lot less for [lawyers] of color...And that’s the bottom line.

—Senior partner, black man

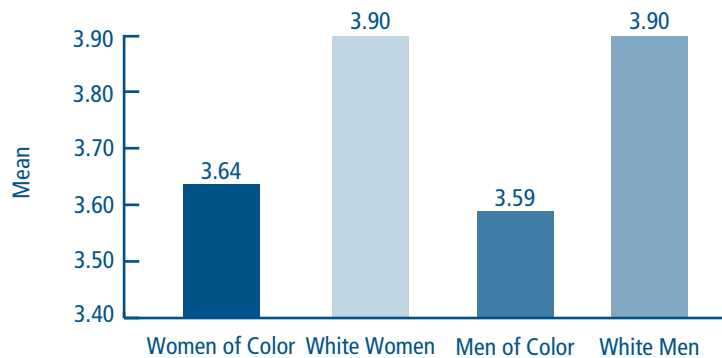
It’s more like 700 “do’s and don’ts.” Certainly there are handbooks and things, and there are training sessions for new lawyers, and some of it you learn from other people, through informal mentoring [relationships]...I’ve always felt that the informal was more effective.

—Senior partner, white woman

PEOPLE OF COLOR REPORTED RECEIVING LIMITED SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISING ATTORNEYS

While all groups reported relatively high levels of overall support from supervising attorneys, lawyers of color were significantly less likely than whites to report overall satisfaction in this regard (see Figure 15).³² Here the mean score for each demographic group is presented, reflecting levels of satisfaction with supervising attorney support. The higher the score is, the higher the level of satisfaction.

Figure 15: Overall Satisfaction With Supervising Attorney Support



Lawyers of color were significantly less likely than white lawyers to agree with the following positive statements:

- "My supervisor really cares about my well-being." (Mean scores: women of color, 3.59; men of color, 3.49; white women, 3.88; white men, 3.78)
- "My supervisor is comfortable interacting with me." (Mean scores: women of color, 3.97; men of color, 3.89; white women, 4.13; white men, 4.18)
- "My supervisor evaluates my performance fairly." (Mean scores: women of color, 3.96; men of color, 3.84; white women, 4.15; white men, 4.11)

The following quotations capture the importance of timely and candid feedback for women of color:

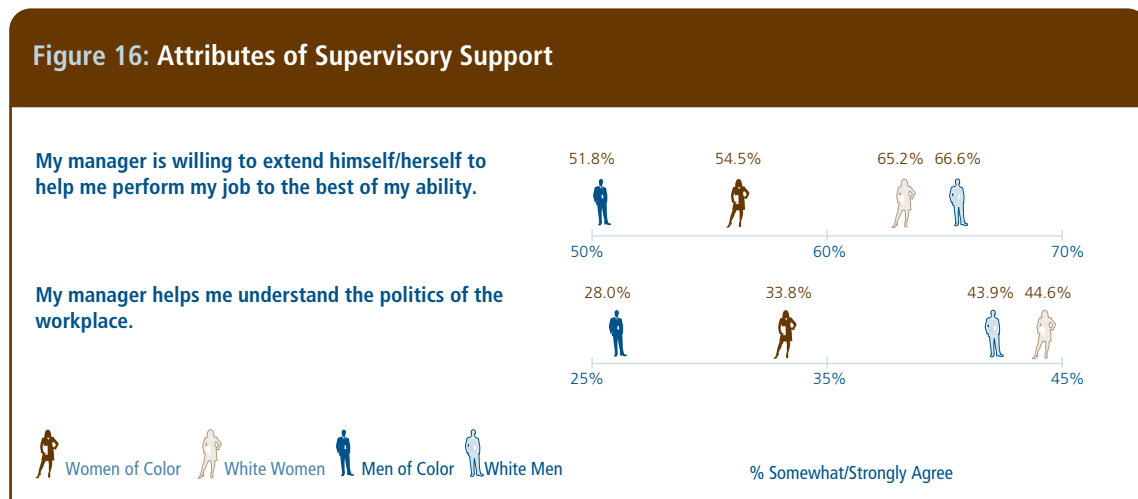
Specific to women of color, we are relying on our wits to get good work, and it's important for us to get good, concrete evaluations. I think [my] firm as a whole doesn't do a good job, and I think they have not done a good job for me as a woman of color in terms of providing valuable critique and evaluation.

—Black woman

I just think that it would be great if there was some more communication between the work that you provide to somebody and how they received it—whether or not it was okay... Because everyone is like, "Oh, you know that your work is good if they continue to use you."

—Latina

Lawyers of color (women and men) felt other challenges in forging strong relationships with their supervising attorneys—specifically how willing these attorneys were to extend themselves on behalf of those being supervised, and how helpful their supervisors were in advising them about the politics of the workplace (see Figure 16).



The following quotations illustrate how women of color perceived both the manifestation and importance of relationships in a law firm environment:

[People] above you want you to make them look good...and [those] below you are trying to outshine you as much as possible so that you don't appear more competent [than they are]. Or [the people below you] would take over any chance for glory if there's any open opportunity. [If] you're on another assignment, and they are below you on the totem pole in terms of class year, they would grab the opportunity to be running the deal as much as possible...[in order] to get as much attention from the partner as possible.

—Asian woman

I just realized how important your personal relationships with your co-workers are, especially at the senior level, because a lot of opportunities come through just knowing people and hearing people talk about things. I knew it was important to get your face in front of partners and to go into people's offices, but I think when you're really junior...[this is] intimidating.

—Latina

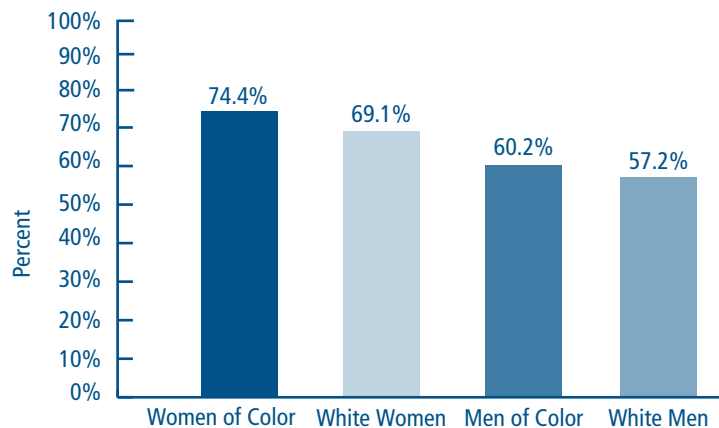
WOMEN OF COLOR PERCEIVE THEIR MENTORS AS LACKING IN INFLUENCE

Previous research by Catalyst and others has found that mentoring relationships can be effective in developing and retaining people of color and women employees within business organizations. Typically, successful minority executives have developed a strong network of sponsors and mentors.³³

33. Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management Series* (1997-2004); David A. Thomas, "The Truth About Mentoring Minorities: Race Matters," *Harvard Business Review* (April 2001): p. 98-107.

Our findings suggest that many law firms foster a mentoring culture; approximately two-thirds of the survey respondents reported having a mentor. However, when we looked more closely at the quality of such mentorships, we found varying levels of satisfaction among those being mentored.

Figure 17: Percentage of Lawyers With Mentors



A CLOSER LOOK AT MENTORS

- **Mentors most likely to come from within the firm:** Among respondents with either formal or informal mentors, more than 90 percent reported that their mentors worked at their firms (women of color, 94.5 percent; white women, 97.3 percent; men of color, 95.8 percent; white men, 98.0 percent).
- **A mix of formal and informal mentors:** Of those with mentors, more than 50 percent reported having informal mentors—that is, mentors other than those assigned to them as part of their firm’s formal mentoring programs (women of color, 57.7 percent; white women, 54.9 percent; men of color, 52.8 percent; white men, 60.4 percent). Additionally, 42.3 percent of women of color, 45.1 percent of white women, 47.2 percent of men of color, and 39.6 percent of white men reported having formal mentors.
- **Mentors more likely to be supervising attorneys:** Among those with mentors, more than 40 percent reported having their supervising attorneys as their mentors (women of color, 43.6 percent; white women, 48.6 percent; men of color, 45.9 percent; white men, 50.8 percent).
- **Men more likely to have men as mentors:** Among those with mentors, men were significantly more likely than women to have men as mentors (women of color, 57.1 percent; white women 60.6 percent; men of color, 86.2 percent; white men, 84.9 percent).
- **Mentors most likely to be white:** While more than 70 percent of survey respondents reported having a white mentor, whites were significantly more likely to have white mentors (women of color, 75.9 percent; white women, 94.5 percent; men of color, 72.4 percent; white men, 90.4 percent).

The following quotations from women of color highlight their perceptions of mentoring relationships:

What's been helpful for me [is that I have] one partner mentor I know. She's is a minority female...I think if we had [that kind of a role model]...that's very helpful to our development.

—Asian woman

As [a woman] of color, you could have mentors but you also need...sponsors—someone to go up to bat for you.

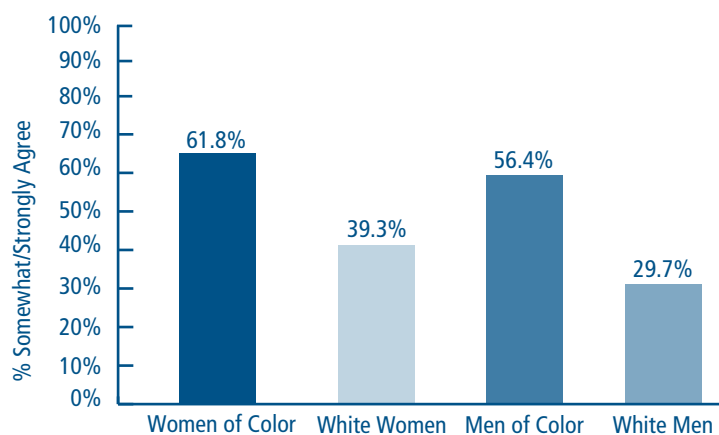
—Black woman

When you first come in, they try to assign you to someone in your department or in your practice group...I felt sometimes I was assigned to mentors who really had no interest in mentoring or [who]...knew what it meant.

—Latina

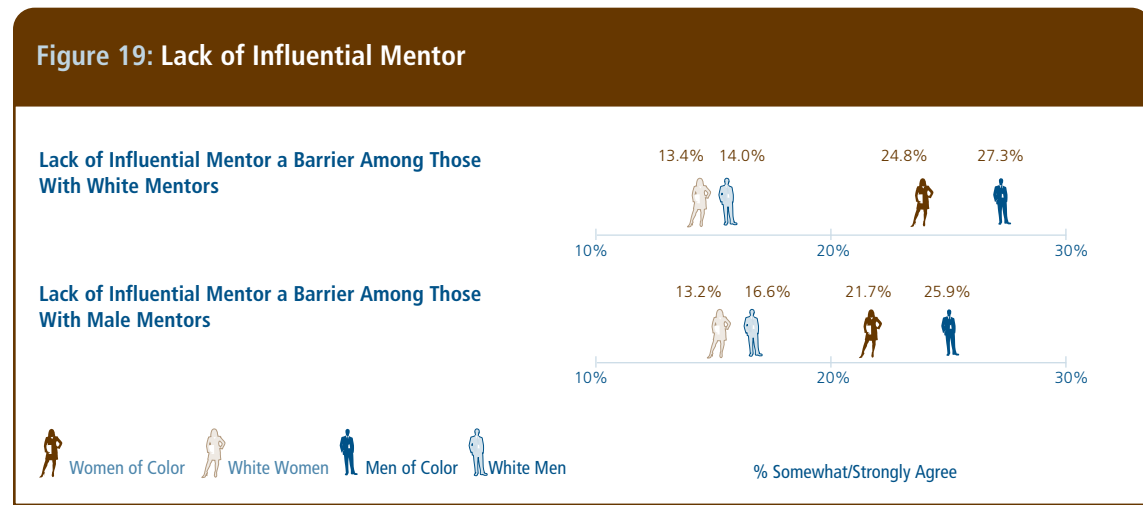
To assess whether mentoring relationships translated into opportunities for development and advancement among women of color, we examined perceived barriers to advancement among respondents who reported having mentors. We found that “lack of influential mentor or sponsor” was most likely to be perceived as a barrier for women of color (see Figure 18). This suggests that many women of color perceived that their mentors lacked influence within their organizations and that this contributed to their own challenges. (See Chapter 5 for more detail on barriers to advancement.)

Figure 18: Among Those With Mentors, Lack of Influential Mentor a Barrier



Data also showed that people of color were significantly less likely than whites to report being satisfied with coaching from their mentors that was aimed at helping them become more politically savvy in their firms (mean scores: people of color, 3.41; whites, 3.59).³⁴ Among women of color, Asian women were least likely to report satisfaction with their mentoring relationships.³⁵

Even when lawyers of color (women and men) had white mentors and/or male mentors, they were still significantly more likely than white lawyers to perceive that their mentors lacked influence within their organizations (see Figure 19).



WHITE WOMEN LAWYERS BENEFITED MOST FROM MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WHITES

White women lawyers who had white mentors were most likely to feel this was beneficial to their careers. These white women lawyers were also significantly more likely than women of color to agree with the following positive statements:

- "My mentoring relationship is characterized by trust and mutual sharing." (Women of color, 66.1 percent; white women, 77.9 percent).
- "My mentor helps me navigate the organizational environment." (Women of color, 69.4 percent; white women, 78.2 percent).
- "My mentor coaches me on how to become politically savvy in the organization." (Women of color, 56.2 percent; white women, 63.8 percent).

LAWYERS OF COLOR REPORTED LIMITED ACCESS TO AND SUPPORT FROM INFORMAL NETWORKS

Informal networks are those connections between people that do not show up in official organizational charts. These networks are critical to the flow of information in law firms because they enable employees to connect with influential others in the workplace. Such networks have been described as "a fabric of personal contacts who will provide support, feedback, insights, resources, and information."³⁶

34. This finding is significant at $p < .1$.

35. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: Asian women, 60.6 percent; black women, 83.0 percent; Latinas, 88.5 percent.

36. Hermina Ibarra and Mark Hunter, "How Leaders Create and Use Networks," *Harvard Business Review* (January 2007).

In general, lawyers of color were significantly less likely than their white counterparts to report feeling satisfied with overall access to and support from informal networks in their firms (mean scores: people of color, 3.28; whites, 3.40).

Lawyers of color were also significantly less likely than their white counterparts to agree with the following positive statements:

- "I have access to social networks of influential colleagues." (Mean scores: people of color, 2.98; whites, 3.20)
- "I know what is really going on in the organization." (Mean scores: people of color, 2.67; whites, 2.86)
- "I have had a meal with a partner in the last two months." (Mean scores: people of color, 3.47; whites, 3.68)³⁷

The following quotations from women of color illustrate how critical relationships are to advancement in a law firm:

I have been tapped on the back...but it's not like a tap on the back to play golf. And that is really valuable as far as building relationships and becoming really valuable to the firm. But being tapped on the back to go and sit in a room [filled with other] women of color is nice, and hopefully it will lead to long-term changes in our firm. But for here and now...each of us suffers.

—Black woman

Being smart and being hard-working [isn't] enough [for minorities]...At the end of the day...having the right relationships and having worked on the right projects [are] the most important indicators of whether someone is going to make it here. So you may have billed 2,400 hours, you may have billed whoever and done good work; it doesn't matter if you haven't [put together] those other two pieces of the puzzle.

—Latina

The relationship aspect is extremely important here...People [who] started with me—white men who were deemed really smart—the firm creates this buzz around them. It's unspoken that they're really brilliant, and they're really talented. I think a lot of that has to do with the relationships that person sort of developed early on and the reputation that they had which may or may not be founded on the concrete great assignments, but a lot on...who they are.

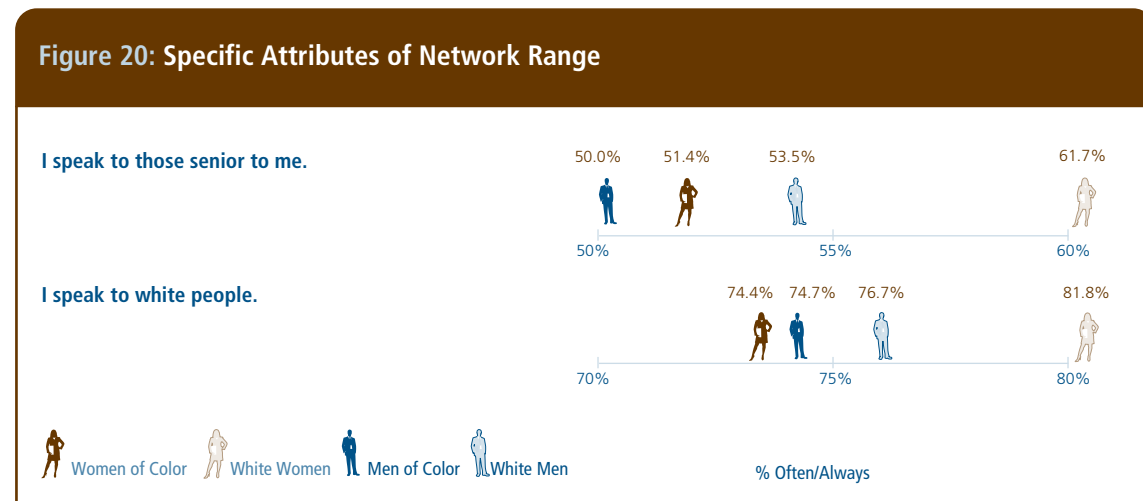
—Black woman

37. This finding is significant at $p < .1$.

LAWYERS OF COLOR LESS LIKELY TO SPEAK TO WHITES AND TO SENIOR COLLEAGUES

We asked survey respondents how often they spoke with colleagues from specific groups when they needed certain information. These groups were differentiated by gender (women and men); by race/ethnicity (Asian, black, Latina/Latino, white); by hierarchical level (peers, senior lawyers); and by business unit/practice area (within one's unit/area or outside it).

In general, lawyers from all demographic groups were highly likely to speak with their peers (women of color, 80.8 percent; white women, 81.1 percent; men of color, 79.5 percent; and white men, 73.1 percent). White women lawyers reported speaking to the widest range of people within their firms. This suggests that they had access to a broad range of people who could supply them with various types of help and information (see Figure 20).



In terms of networking, women of color were less likely than white women to:

- Speak with people in their firms who were senior to them (women of color, 51.4 percent; white women, 61.7 percent).
- Speak to men (women of color, 66.2 percent; white women, 73.7 percent).
- Speak to whites (women of color, 74.4 percent; white women, 81.8 percent).

In this chapter we have highlighted differences in how mentoring and other relationships within law firms were perceived and experienced by women of color, white women, and men. In the next chapter we review findings related to how women of color perceived both opportunities for advancement and barriers to success within their organizations.

CHAPTER 5: FACING BARRIERS, MISSING OPPORTUNITIES

Findings at a Glance

- Women of color reported the lowest overall satisfaction with equity and opportunity at their law firms, followed by men of color. This measure included satisfaction with advancement opportunities and compensation, perceived fairness, and consistency between one's experience and level of work.
 - People of color were significantly less likely than whites to be satisfied with career advancement opportunities and with their current level of work relative to their years of experience.
 - People of color and women—both women of color and white women—were significantly less likely than white men to believe they could compete successfully to advance in their firms.
- Lawyers of color were significantly less likely than whites to report overall satisfaction with business development opportunities in their firms.
- The top barriers to advancement cited by women of color included: lack of similar role models; lack of influential mentors/sponsors; lack of informal networking with influential colleagues; not enough candid and constructive feedback; and lack of professional development opportunities.
 - People of color were more likely than whites to cite not understanding organizational politics as a barrier.
 - People of color and women were significantly more likely than white men to cite lack of similar role models and lack of challenging roles on client engagements as barriers.
- People of color were significantly more likely than whites to state their intentions to leave their current employers. In particular, women of color were significantly more likely than all other groups to seriously consider leaving their firms.

Previous research on law firms has identified structural and organizational factors that create implicit barriers for women and people of color. These barriers include: inequity in access to training opportunities; subjectivity in promotion standards, selection for assignments, and compensation decisions; not being assigned challenging tasks; unfair performance appraisals; and the lack of developmental experiences such as mentoring.³⁸

38. "Trading Action for Access: The Myth of Meritocracy and the Failure to Remedy Structural Discrimination," *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 121, no. 8, p. 2156-2177, (June 2008); David B. Wilkins and G. Mitu Gulati, "Why Are There So Few Black Lawyers in Corporate Law Firms? An Institutional Analysis," *California Law Review*, vol. 83, no. 3 (May 1996): p. 493-618.

In this chapter, we examine job satisfaction, advancement, and perceived barriers to advancement among women lawyers of color. We highlight how one noteworthy aspect of advancement—business development opportunities—is experienced and perceived by women of color. We also describe intent to leave for women of color, white women, men of color, and white men.

Findings presented in this chapter confirm that women of color are disadvantaged in the relationship-based environment of law firms. This relates to their outsider status, especially when it comes to allocation of assignments, access to high-profile engagements, and training opportunities for enhancing business development skills.

The following quotations from senior partners emphasize the client-service nature of law firms and how people of color might miss advancement opportunities:

Given that we're a client-service organization, the critical skill is how...a person deal[s] with clients and...the client's reaction to that individual. Do [clients] like the work? Do they like the individual? Do they say, "Oh, I was really pleased with so-and-so, and I would like to see that person work for me in the future"? And then, we try to make an assessment. How hard-working is this person? What is their overall attitude? Do they make work a priority or is it something [they] are slotting around their other commitments? I would say the number one factor is client reaction and acceptability.

—Senior partner, white man

[Allocation of assignments] is not [decided] on any formal basis...[It has a lot to do] with luck as to who ends up naturally mentoring you. It depends a lot on whether a young lawyer is a self-starter or not, and [whether he or she attaches himself or herself] to somebody who turns out to be a good mentor and includes them in opportunities.

—Senior partner, Latino

There's not a lot of centralized planning around work allocation. It ends up being an individual one is comfortable with, an individual who is assertive about going out and approaching people to work on matters that interest them, as opposed to a personality who sits behind a desk and waits for the phone to ring.

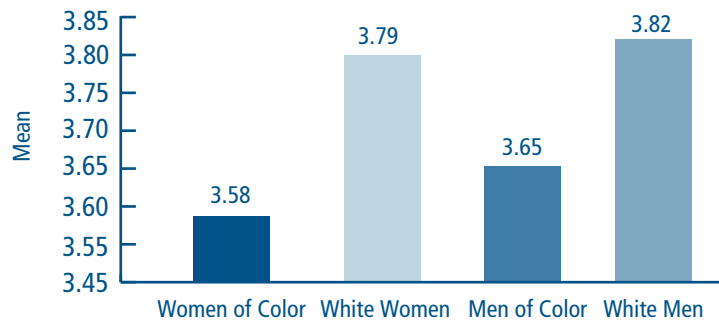
—Senior partner, white woman

WOMEN OF COLOR EXPERIENCED THE LOWEST SATISFACTION WITH EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY

People of color were significantly less likely than whites to report overall satisfaction with equity and opportunity in their law firms. Women of color reported the lowest score compared to other demographic groups (see Figure 21). This measure includes satisfaction with advancement opportunities and compensation, perceived fairness, and consistency between the respondent's experience and current level of work.³⁹ Here the mean score for each demographic group is presented, reflecting levels of satisfaction with advancement opportunities.

39. See Technical Appendix B for a description of measures making up this index and its reliability.

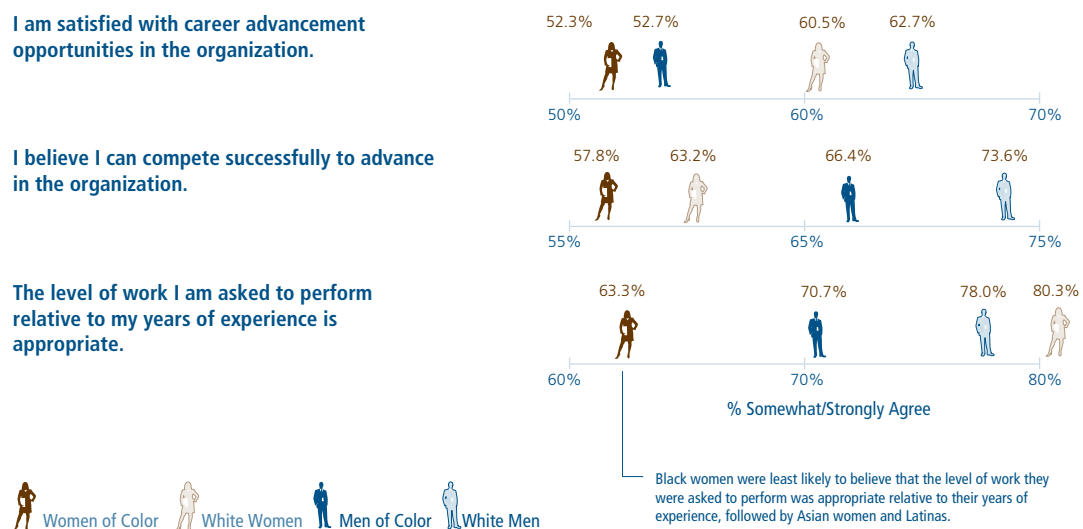
Figure 21: Overall Satisfaction With Equity and Opportunity



People of color were significantly less likely than whites to be satisfied with advancement opportunities in their organizations and with the current level of work assigned to them relative to their years of experience. Within this group, women of color were least likely to be satisfied, with the lowest level of satisfaction expressed by black women, followed by Asian women and Latina lawyers.⁴⁰

Both women of color and white women were significantly less likely than white men to believe they could compete successfully to advance in their firms. Women of color were least likely to express this belief.

Figure 22: Specific Aspects of Advancement



40. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: Latinas, 78.0 percent; Asian women, 64.4 percent; black women, 54.5 percent.

The following quotation from a black woman highlights a perceived inequity regarding allocation of work:

Somebody who's a lot less intelligent...[who] has the bravado, plays the game, is the white male with the khakis on...He's not more intelligent than you are, but he's smarter than you... It doesn't matter how intelligent you are, you're going to be stunted at a certain skill level because the person who's smart is going to keep getting deals and keep getting the skills and the experience.

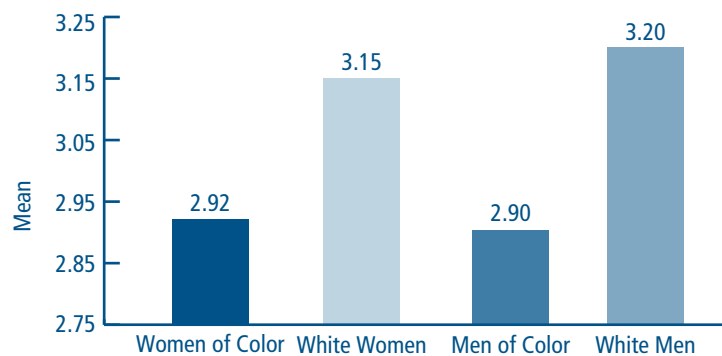
—Black woman

PEOPLE OF COLOR LEAST SATISFIED WITH ACCESS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The billable-hours business model of law firms means that business development is at the core of both organizational and individual success. Previous research has found that women of color employed in large law firms reported limited access to client development/relationship opportunities, including fewer desirable assignments. The research suggests that, because of their race/ethnicity and/or gender, women lawyers of color are not getting the right assignments to advance.⁴¹

In general, lawyers of color were significantly less likely than whites to report overall satisfaction with business development opportunities in their current positions (see Figure 23).⁴² Here the average scores for each demographic group are presented, reflecting overall satisfaction with business development opportunities. The higher the score is, the greater the satisfaction.

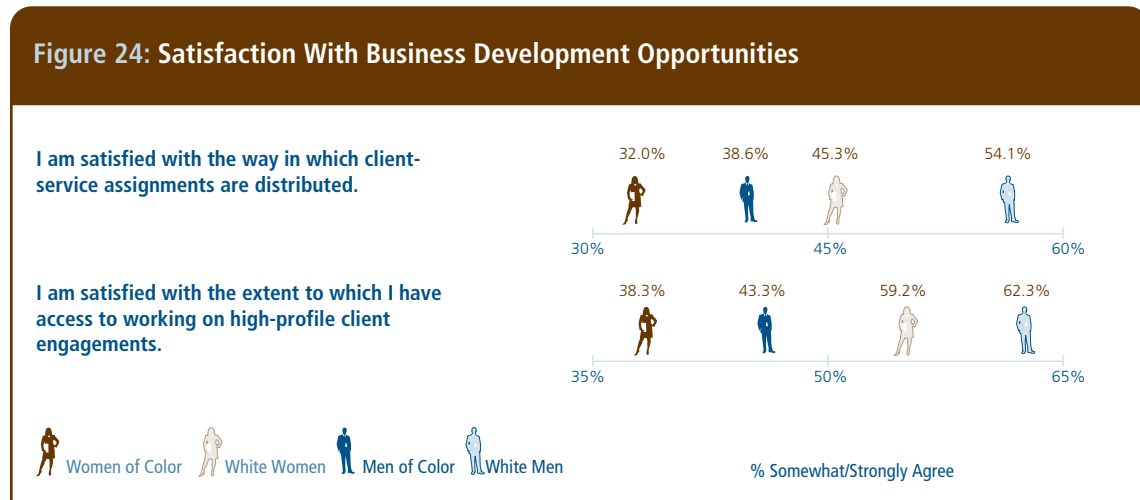
Figure 23: Overall Satisfaction With Business Development Opportunities



41. American Bar Association, Commission on Women in the Profession. *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms* (2006). Twenty-nine percent of women of color and 25 percent of men of color reported feeling that they missed out on desirable assignments because of race. Thirty-five percent of women of color and 24 percent men of color felt they had missed client development/relationship opportunities because of race. In comparison, less than 1 percent of both white women and men attributed career-damaging experiences to race. Furthermore, 32 percent of women of color and 39 percent of white women (compared to less than 3 percent of white men and men of color) reported missing out on desirable assignments because of gender.

42. See Technical Appendix B for a description of measures making up this index and its reliability.

Furthermore, when it came to specific access to business development opportunities and staffing on important client engagements, people of color were significantly less satisfied than whites. Women of color were less satisfied than men of color in this area (see Figure 24).



The following quotations focus on how women of color felt about their access to opportunities:

The access to the opportunities is different for women of color, largely because of the informal versus the formal process, and [how] in the informal process, partners seek you out to do certain assignments, and naturally they have more of an affinity for others of their same background...So, [fewer] women of color are targeted for those great assignments through the informal process...When I've gotten good assignments, it has been through the informal process, but [it has required my] reaching out to partners and saying, "I'd really like to work with you on A, B, and C."

—Black woman

Partners can choose who they want to work with...and...it does not necessarily have anything to do with work quality. Presumably, most people [are] going to do excellent work, and so when they have a choice of who they're going to go work with, they may not choose the person from whatever region of the country they're not from. They may not choose a person [with whom they don't share] common interests, and they may not choose a person [who is] not going to go to the golf course with them...have a beer with them...be able to talk baseball, football, and whatever else. I mean, it's just about social interactions...and...because minorities don't have generally someone who necessarily shares a lot of their interests, or their background, sometimes you just get passed over.

—Latina

TOP BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN OF COLOR

Examining the top barriers to advancement for women of color highlights how difficult it is for them to forge relationships and make important connections at work. Table 1 lists the top barriers cited by women of color and how they compare to those cited by white women, men of color, and white men. These findings suggest that while white women lawyers may still experience sexism in the workplace, they have successfully developed relationships and networks that give them both direct and indirect access to insider groups. For example:

- People of color and white women were significantly more likely than white men to cite “lack of similar role models” as a barrier. Furthermore, women of color were significantly more likely than white women to mention this barrier.
- Both women of color and men of color were more likely than white lawyers to cite “not understanding organizational politics” as a barrier, suggesting that people of color may be excluded from insider groups in law firms.
- People of color were also significantly more likely than white lawyers to cite “lack of influential mentors or sponsors” and “lack of professional development opportunities” as barriers to advancement.
- People of color were significantly more likely than white women to cite “lack of informal networking with influential colleagues” as a barrier.

Table 1: Top Barriers to Advancement for Women of Color

	Women of Color a	White Women b	Men of Color c	White Men d
Lack similar role models	33.6% *b,d	26.1% *d	31.9% *d	8.9%
Lack influential mentors or sponsors	33.5% *b,d	21.7%	37.5% *b,d	20.2%
Lack informal networking with influential colleagues	25.8% *b	18.7%	33.3% *b,d	19.3%
Lack candid and constructive feedback	25.7% *b,d	16.9%	20.8%	14.4%
Lack professional development opportunities	23.8% *b,d	13.0%	21.1% *b,d	11.5%
Don't understand organizational politics	20.8% *b, d	10.6%	24.4% *b, d	12.5%
* =significant difference between groups at the .05 level				

Among women of color, we found that black women lawyers were more likely than other women of color to cite “lack of challenging roles on client engagements” and “lack of candid and constructive feedback” as barriers.⁴³ Asian women, followed by Latinas, were more likely than black women to mention “not understanding organizational politics” and “not willing to work long hours” as barriers to their advancement.⁴⁴

43. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree “lack of challenging roles on client assignments”: Asian women, 11.6 percent; black women, 23.8 percent; Latinas, 5.0 percent; Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree “lack of candid and constructive feedback”: Asian women, 17.9 percent; black women, 35.9 percent; Latinas, 25.0 percent.

44. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree “not understanding organizational politics”: Asian women, 24.2 percent; black women, 12.7 percent; Latinas, 22.5 percent; Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree “not willing to work long hours”: Asian women, 19.4 percent; black women, 9.5 percent; Latinas, 12.5 percent.

The first week [at the firm], we do this training, and they parade all these big-time partners in front of you...[who] talk about how you should proceed as a first-year associate, and I remember having this feeling—thinking about all of these four men in front of me—[that] I don't see myself in any of them, and I think from that day forward, whether that was conscious or unconscious, I sort of decided, I don't really know that I want to be like those people...A lot of women of color perhaps decide that the senior leadership positions...are not for them.

—Black woman

I think...some people's concern is [whether] a female minority [can] be as effective at bringing in clients as her counterparts who might not have the same [race/ethnicity/gender-based obstacles]...The question to ask [yourself] is: "Are you going to be afforded the opportunities to develop the ability to bring in business?"

—Asian woman

I perceive that partners will want to make fellow partners or have their fellow partners be sort of similar—like people they feel comfortable interacting with on a more social level. I feel like there's a certain pocket, or a certain type of person within the firm, who will belong to a country club or who will be the chair of something. I mean there are some exceptions, but it's not people like me who are running around...on committees [for] different sorts of organizations.

—Latina

You build relationships with the people...[based on] people's first...impressions of who you are...That comes from a lot of things—stereotypes, schools that you came from...A lot of that plays into who gets hired [and] who has what connections when they come into the firm.

—Black woman

HIGHEST INTENT TO LEAVE EXPRESSED BY LAWYERS OF COLOR

While some level of natural attrition is built into the business model for law firms, losing talent is never desirable.⁴⁵ From an economic standpoint, when a lawyer leaves his or her firm, the cost to the employer is equal to—or even greater than—that person's total annual salary and benefits.⁴⁶

People leave jobs due to so-called "push" and "pull" factors. Push factors tend to drive people away from their current situation or place; pull factors draw them to a new situation or place. Employers have little control over certain pull factors (e.g., the offer of a higher-paying job at another law firm). But they can attempt

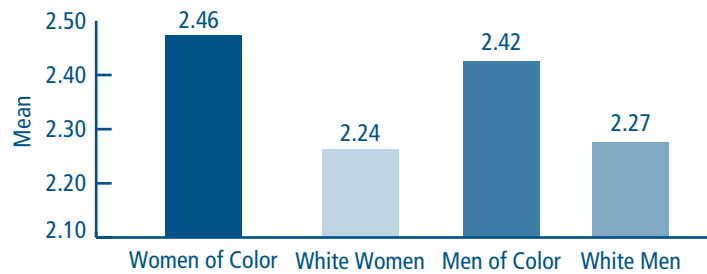
45. Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Building a Business Case for Flexibility* (2005).

46. Ibid.

to hold onto their workforce by reducing push factors (e.g., lack of challenging work, limited development opportunities, lack of role models in senior leadership, unclear career paths, and lack of respect for work-life effectiveness).⁴⁷

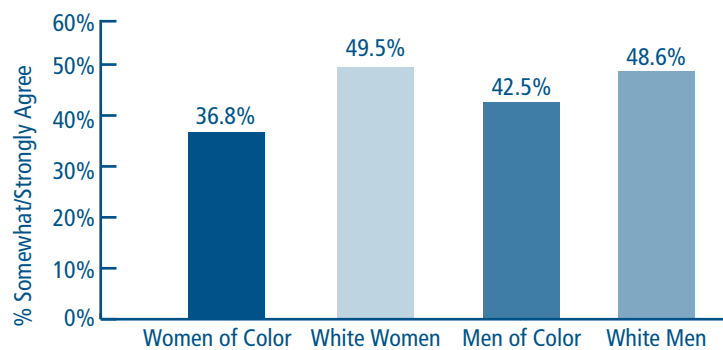
Data from our survey indicate that, in general, people of color were significantly more likely than whites to have a higher overall intent to leave their current employers (see Figure 25).⁴⁸

Figure 25: Overall Intent to Leave



More specifically, while one-third to one-half of respondents in all groups said they were not seriously considering leaving their current employers, women of color were significantly less likely than white women and white men to deny a serious intent to leave (see Figure 26).⁴⁹ In other words, women of color were more likely to harbor intentions to leave their firms.

Figure 26: "I Am Not Seriously Considering Leaving at All."



47. WFD Consulting, *It's About Time*, vol. 10 (Winter 2004); Elizabeth D. Almer and Steven E. Kaplan, "The Effects of Flexible Work Arrangements on Stressors, Burnout, and Behavioral Job Outcomes in Accounting," *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2002): p. 1-34; Robert Toigo Foundation and Heidrick and Struggles, *Retention Returns: Insights for More Effective Diversity Initiatives* (2006).

48. This finding is significant at the $p < .1$ level.

49. This finding is significant at the $p < .1$ level.

The following quotations provide further insight into why women of color might be more likely than others to consider leaving their current employers:

Black women are just like, “Let me just ride it out as long as I can ride it out.” And when it comes time to where you’re trying to break me down as to who I am—and I’m not going to break on this point—then I’ll bounce. But until then, I’ll take what I can take out of the experience.

—Black woman

If people are leaving, it’s because someone is sending the message that they’re not perceived as valuable...Perhaps we’d be well advised to...make sure that we develop a strong network so that we have some way to bring in some business, some [way] to boost that image, so that we have something unique to offer the firm.

—Latina

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that women of color perceived themselves to be working in a highly exclusive culture. In comparison, white women felt more comfortable and connected within their firm environments. Clearly, firms with cultures that exclude and stereotype women of color will find it challenging to retain them, as long as women of color continue to feel they are missing important opportunities and facing other barriers to development and advancement. In the next chapter, we look more closely at the challenges posed by work-life effectiveness for women of color and compare their perceptions and experiences to those of people from other demographic groups.

CHAPTER 6: WORK-LIFE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Findings at a Glance

- Catalyst interviews with senior partners in a subsample of participating law firms revealed the prevalent attitudes about work-life issues and showed how firms have attempted to create a more flexible culture.
- Respondents were asked about the variability of their schedules as lawyers and whether such variability had a negative impact on achieving work-life effectiveness. Between 63 and 74 percent of all respondents said this was not their experience. Women of color were significantly less likely than white women and white men to agree that variability in their schedules posed challenges to achieving work-life effectiveness.
- Women lawyers were more likely than men to be aware of their firms' resources aimed at helping employees achieve work-life effectiveness.
 - Lawyers of color (women and men) were significantly more likely than whites to feel that their firms' existing work-life resources lacked sensitivity toward employees from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Although between 45 and 60 percent of all respondents said that their supervising attorneys were supportive of their need for work-life effectiveness, white women were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than lawyers of color.
- Among those with children under 18, women—both women of color and white women—were more likely than men to cite childcare commitments as a personal factor that made achieving work-life effectiveness challenging.
- Women of color seemed to have different work-life needs and faced unique challenges in achieving work-life effectiveness than white women did—for example, women of color who took part in focus groups said their own conceptions of family did not “fit” with their firms' image in this regard.

Some business organizations may offer only limited support for employees who want to manage work and other commitments—an approach often referred to as “work-life effectiveness.” In these organizations, flexibility is seen as an accommodation made on an individual basis, senior leaders are perceived to work continuously, and workplace “stars” are those whose primary devotion of time is to their workplace.⁵⁰ Flexibility may be harder to achieve in professional services firms—including law firms—largely because of the connection between an employee's billable hours of work and their perceived contribution to the firm.⁵¹

50. Lisa D'Anolfo Levey, Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, and Aimee Horowitz, *Beyond Flexibility: Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance* (Catalyst, 2008): p. 3.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Studies involving business organizations that have developed and implemented work-life effectiveness programs show that such programs help firms attract and retain high-quality professionals; there is also evidence that such initiatives are an important factor in employee satisfaction. These programs advance business success through effective talent management, increased employee engagement, and enhanced productivity.⁵²

Previous Catalyst research has found that while women and men university graduates reported similar levels and sources of work-life conflict, women law graduates were particularly affected by work-life issues in terms of their advancement and career paths. Whether by choice or necessity, women law graduates were more likely to opt for flexible work arrangements; at the same time, many felt that accepting such arrangements compromised their career advancement. Evidence also suggests that our perceptions regarding people's ability to manage work and personal responsibilities are guided by the workplace norms related to performance, informal flexibility, and leadership behavior.⁵³

In this chapter, we examine work-life quality experienced by women of color working in U.S. law firms. We suggest that before firms create work-life effectiveness programs that are sensitive to the needs of women of color, they must first consider the combined effects of these women's intersecting identities.

The following quotations from senior partners reveal the prevalent culture in law firms regarding work-life quality and how firms continue to be stymied in their attempts to create a flexible culture that works for all lawyers, not only women.

I've had people [ask] "Should I just go part-time, right now, and not even try to make partner, because it's so hard and I'm going to sacrifice so much, my family's going to sacrifice so much?"...We have part-time counsels, and that can be, I think, a sort of semi-permanent professional role for working women at the firm...In the long-term scheme of things, I've had people express at least curiosity, if not yet concern, about the fact that [there] are very few, if any, part-time partners.

—Senior partner, white woman

We still have some partners who look at things like part-time work—for example, a lawyer who is on a part-time basis in order to accommodate family needs—and think "lack of commitment" or... "Well, you can't really do what we do with that sort of attitude." I think it is a small number [who think this way], but...the single most important thing in my mind would be to get people to recognize that that's really not the correct attitude. It is possible to meet the job obligations and also have a flexible schedule or even a part-time schedule.

—Senior partner, white man

52. Corporate Voices for Working Families, *Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion* (November 2005).

53. Catalyst, *Women in Law: Making the Case* (2001); Catalyst, *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt: Building the Business Case for Flexibility*, (2005); Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Creating Opportunities for Better Balance* (2005); Catalyst, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Lawyers State Their Case on Job Flexibility* (2006).

I don't know whether a part-time associate or part-time counsel has ever been promoted to partner...There's certainly an effect on career advancement, if you officially go part-time.

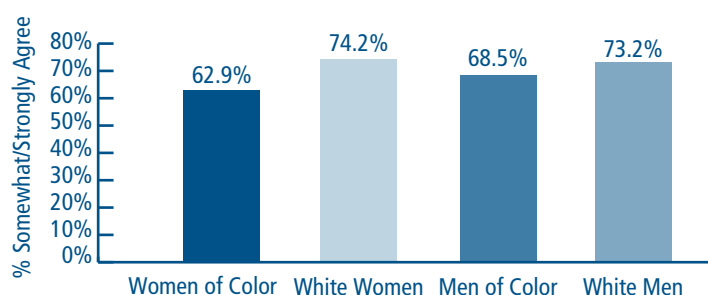
—Senior partner, white woman

VARIABILITY OF SCHEDULES MAKES WORK-LIFE A CHALLENGE FOR ALL LAWYERS

All groups, regardless of race/ethnicity and gender, cited long work hours as a major challenge to achieving work-life effectiveness (women of color, 59.5 percent; white women, 69.0 percent; men of color, 60.4 percent; white men, 66.0 percent). This confirms what is commonly known about the work culture in law firms.

We also asked respondents to comment on the variability of their schedules and about whether such variability had a negative impact on achieving work-life effectiveness. Between 63 and 74 percent of all respondents said this was their experience. However, people of color—and especially women of color—were significantly less likely than white women and white men to feel this way (see Figure 27).

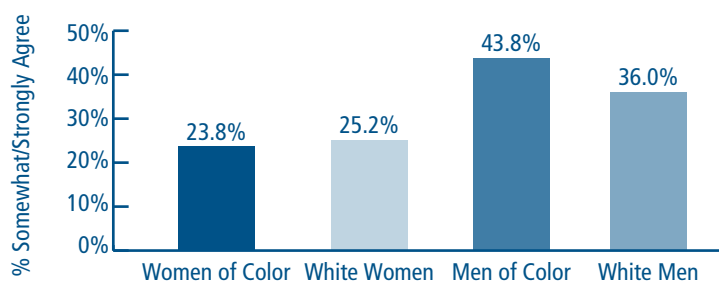
Figure 27: "The Variability of My Schedule Makes It Difficult for Me to Balance My Work and Personal Life."



WOMEN LAWYERS MORE LIKELY TO KNOW ABOUT WORK-LIFE ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The data suggested that overall, women were significantly more likely than men to know about their firms' work-life resources. Figure 28 highlights the percentage of respondents who said they were *not* aware of these resources at the time of the survey.

Figure 28: "I Am Not Aware of Organizational Resources for Work-Life Effectiveness."

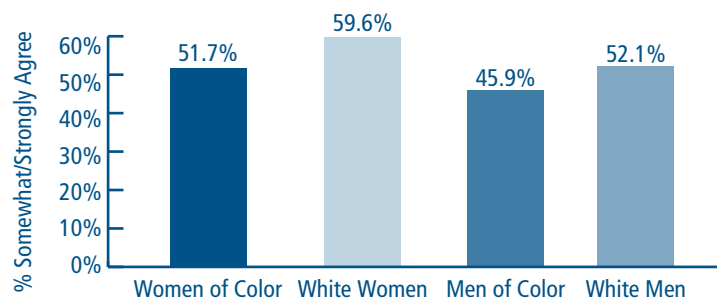


However, both women of color and men of color were significantly more likely than white women and white men to feel that work-life resources offered by their firms lacked sensitivity to racial/ethnic differences (women of color, 12.4 percent; white women, 4.6 percent; men of color, 12.7 percent; white men, 3.0 percent).

WHITE WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO PERCEIVE WORK-LIFE SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISING ATTORNEYS

Although between 45 and 60 percent of all respondents agreed that their supervisors/managers were supportive of their need for work-life effectiveness, white women were significantly more likely to agree with this statement than lawyers of color (see Figure 29).

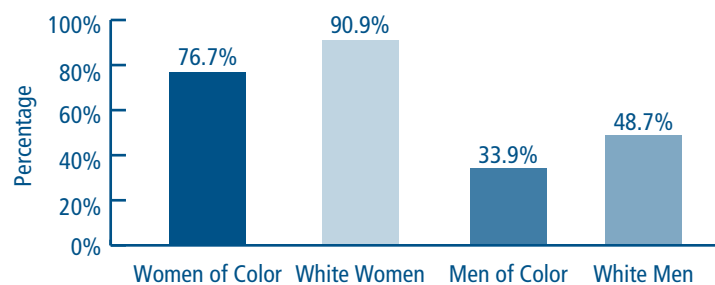
Figure 29: "My Supervisor/Project Manager Supports My Work-Life Effectiveness."



CHILDCARE COMMITMENTS CHALLENGE WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS FOR WOMEN

Among those with children under 18, more white women and women of color cited childcare as a personal factor that makes achieving work-life effectiveness challenging compared to men of color and white men.

Figure 30: Percentage of Parents for Whom Childcare Made Achieving Work-Life Effectiveness Difficult



Because high numbers of lawyers from all groups cited childcare as a challenge to achieving work-life effectiveness, we examined the personal strategies used by respondents to get help with childcare and household responsibilities.

- White women (80.6 percent) were significantly more likely than women of color (61.7 percent), men of color (56.2 percent), and white men (67.5 percent) to use a babysitter for childcare.
- White men (90.7 percent) and men of color (82.1 percent) were more likely than women of color (73.3 percent) and white women (76.9 percent) to cite "spouse/partner" as a resource for childcare.

- White women (90.8 percent) were also significantly more likely than women of color (80.0 percent), men of color (69.0 percent), and white men (72.0 percent) to employ outside services for domestic help.

PERCEPTIONS AND UNIQUE NEEDS OF WOMEN OF COLOR REGARDING WORK-LIFE ISSUES

Respondents in focus groups discussed general culture and informal norms within their firms as barriers to achieving work-life effectiveness. The following quotations underscore the perceptions of women of color regarding informal norms that might impact work-life effectiveness:

Successful female partners [whom] I have seen...don't take vacations. They don't really sleep. They're always here. If they're not here, they're married to [their] Blackberry.

—Asian woman

While the firm [touts itself as] a firm that respects associates' personal lives, the partner that I work for doesn't...How do you deal with renegade partners?...They could work on putting real meaning behind some of the words that they say about respecting time. That would be helpful.

—Black woman

I think [they need to make] it easier to talk, [to make us feel they respect] other commitments and obligations and you can say, "Oh I have to go." This is very uneven...You can say [it] to some people and they'll be like "Oh, yeah, yeah, that's very important, go ahead, don't worry, there's no problem." But it's not true for everyone. I feel like I don't talk about my kids as much, because my other life...is stifled...I want to give the perception that when I'm here, I am just here.

—Latina

The focus groups also found that women of color had specific needs and commitments that were rarely understood in the white, male-dominated culture of law firms.

There's a very distinct difference between some of the issues—[but also] some similarities—that the white female associates face and that some of the black associates face. Some of them have to do with our relationships. We're not all married, and we don't have a husband that makes a six-figure salary...Some of us do, but not all of us do. I think a lot of times, some of the issues that they're talking about aren't really applicable to me, and they seem to talk about these problems that seem foreign...I don't have two nannies and I don't have any [children].

—Black woman

Women of color, maybe coming from a Hispanic family, are really, really close, like insanely close. I had a little cousin who passed away...It was my cousin's baby. But one partner was like, "Who was this?" ...I don't think she understood [why I had to go to the funeral]...It wasn't my nephew or...my own child.

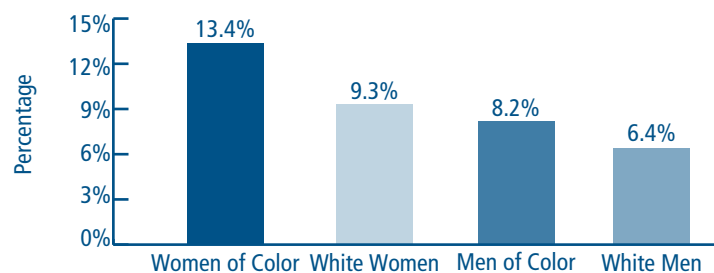
—Latina

I think a big difference is our commitment to our families, our extended families. I have a colleague...a black female associate who pays for her nephew's school, and a partner [commented], "Why would you do that?" There is this lack of understanding of the commitment to our families, which I think makes a difference. Christmas is something that I am not allowed to miss with my family, but if you have a deal...over the Christmas holiday, how do you explain that to a partner? Because in their mind they're thinking, "Why would you want to go home?"

—Black woman

Survey findings also confirmed that women of color were especially likely to report having extended family responsibilities.

Figure 31: Percentage of Respondents for Whom Extended Family Commitments Made Achieving Work-Life Effectiveness Difficult



Furthermore, among women of color, black women lawyers were more likely than Asian women and Latinas to cite participation in community activities as an important personal commitment.⁵⁴

For me, it is important to attend church services on a regular basis...[which is something] that is not being taken as a real and valid commitment here. It seems that the percentage of single women is higher among black associates than among white associates and partners...For me, my outside activities are important and just as valid as someone else who has childcare issues and wants to be around their children...I think that me helping my brother or wanting to go hang out with friends or whatever are not considered to be valid excuses for missing work in the same way as someone who wants to attend their child's birthday party.

—Black woman

54. Percentage Somewhat/Strongly Agree: Asian women, 6.8 percent; black women, 21.6 percent; Latinas, 16.2 percent.

This chapter has highlighted some of the unique challenges facing women of color in the work-life area. While law firms have been proactive in creating policies and practices to help lawyers manage their work commitments with personal responsibilities, these efforts may not address the unique needs of women of color. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, firms with cultures that exclude and stereotype women of color will find it challenging to retain them—even if they have introduced diversity initiatives that provide work-life support for their employees. In the final chapter of the report, we present suggestions about how law firm leadership might go about creating more inclusive work environments.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this report should be of interest to law firms as well as to lawyers, who may recognize themselves and their colleagues in these pages. Indeed, the survey data captured common perceptions among lawyers that existed across all demographic groups—women of color, white women, men of color, and white men. These included: lack of accountability within firms for diversity efforts; inadequate training of supervising attorneys who must deal with a diverse workforce; and variability in schedules that make it challenging for lawyers who seek greater work-life effectiveness.

In particular, the marginalization of women of color in some of the top U.S. law firms was a recurrent theme. What emerged is a picture of professional women who feel disadvantaged in the workplace compared to white women (with whom they share gender), to men of color (with whom they share race/ethnicity), and to white men (from whom they are essentially twice removed). However, women of color are by no means a monolithic group: for example, black women lawyers reported feeling a greater degree of exclusion than Asian women and Latinas.

As stated earlier, women of color now make up almost one-quarter of all women associates in U.S. law firms; yet they comprise less than 2 percent of the partner pool.⁵⁵ Clearly, law firms must be more aggressive in reaching out to women of color already in their ranks and to those who will be hired in the future.

In this final chapter, we:

- Highlight important findings and translate them into steps that will help law firms attract and retain diverse talent and create an environment in which all lawyers can thrive.
- Showcase Diversity & Inclusion Practices that illustrate how other organizations have approached these issues.
- Share recommendations from other reports in the *Women of Color in Professional Services Series*.

WOMEN OF COLOR APPEAR TO BE UNIQUELY DISADVANTAGED

It is imperative that firms wishing to attract, retain, and benefit from all talent understand differences in experiences and perceptions—those which exist between women and men and also between white women and women of color. The intersectionality experienced by women of color frames the differences that should be considered when devising diversity policies and programs. Otherwise, firms risk ineffective execution of diversity practices.

Findings showed that women of color shared certain gender-based disadvantages with white women. These included perceived sexist comments, dissatisfaction with access to training opportunities for business development, and lack of support in balancing work and personal responsibilities. Findings also suggest that

55. NALP, “Law Firm Diversity Demographics Slow to Change—Minority Women Remain Particularly Scarce in Law Firm Partnership Ranks” (December 10, 2008), <http://www.nalp.org/lawfirmdiversity>.

lawyers of color—both women and men—experienced racial/ethnic stereotyping, overall exclusion from the workplace, dissatisfaction with equity and opportunity, dissatisfaction with supervising attorney support, and lack of influential mentors.

In particular, in the relationship-based environment of law firms, where “who you know” is critical for advancement, women of color appeared to be disadvantaged by lack of access to and support from informal networks. They also felt stymied by lack of access to business development opportunities and important client engagements.

Our survey findings demonstrate that women of color face challenges that are different—in both subtle and more obvious ways—from those faced by other lawyers, especially white women. For example, women of color—and black women in particular—reported feeling less connected to others at their firms and perceived their workplace cultures to be highly exclusive. In contrast, white women typically reported feeling much more comfortable and connected within the work environment.

A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Almost all first- and second-tier law firms in the United States have diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs that target women lawyers.⁵⁶ Law firms have made some progress in addressing gender-based disadvantages in the workplace. This is reflected in our findings about white women lawyers, who were more likely than women of color to feel included in decision-making and to report strong relationships with mentors and managers. White women were also more likely to feel included in informal networks (i.e., they were more likely to speak to those senior to them and to other whites in the firm). However, managing partners and practice group leaders must realize that programs that help retain and develop white women lawyers may not be as effective for women of color.

We have translated our findings into a blueprint for action, outlining broad strokes to help those in responsible positions consider and implement positive changes so that law firms may retain and fully utilize women of color. It is important to emphasize that a “one size fits all” approach does not work, and differences among women of color should be recognized and addressed as programs and policies are fine-tuned prior to implementation. Firms should take certain specific steps:

- **Raise awareness within the firm regarding the intersecting identities of women of color.** This includes explaining how such intersectionality is related to hidden biases, subtle discrimination, and perceived exclusion from informal networks and workplace relationships.
- **Create opportunities for dialogue and discussion between women of color and others in the workplace.** Authentic relationships should be encouraged among all associates and partners, including those on the executive committee or partner review committee, practice group leaders, department chairs, and managing partners or firm chairs. Most importantly, firm leaders must ensure that all supervising attorneys receive training in managing and supporting those from different backgrounds and identity groups.

56. NAWL, *Report of the Third Annual National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms* (November 2008), <http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Documents/2008+Survey.pdf>.

- **Equip relevant staff with self-assessment tools and checklists so they can better recognize, understand, and question stereotyping involving women of color.** Staff should also be educated about how such stereotyping negatively impacts the retention, professional development, and advancement of women of color. Those targeted to receive such tools should include practice group leaders, since they are instrumental in providing access to client opportunities. Training should also target those serving on committees in charge of partner promotion.
- **Connect women of color with influential others in the workplace through mandatory touch points.** This might include reverse mentoring, one-on-one meetings, and strategic informal sessions with senior partners, practice area leaders, and staffing personnel.
- **Pair each woman of color with an influential partner or sponsor.** These sponsors can help women of color navigate the firm environment, network with other partners, and enjoy greater visibility.
- **Ensure that mentors in formal programs receive training in mentoring across differences.** Firms should also monitor the developing relationships between mentors and women of color.
- **Monitor and track career development of women of color.** This means ensuring visibility, access, and staffing on important client engagements and in professional development opportunities.
- **Be specific about accountability for diversity initiatives.** This means holding supervising partners, practice area leaders, and staffing personnel accountable for the retention, development, and advancement of women of color.

About the Catalyst Award

Several Diversity & Inclusion Practices highlighted in this report have won the Catalyst Award. This annual Award honors innovative organizational approaches with proven, measurable results that address the recruitment, development, and advancement of all women, including women of color. Catalyst's rigorous, year-long examination of initiatives culminates in intensive on-site evaluations at select organizations. Catalyst assesses a range of strategic approaches related to women's advancement in the workplace. Discrete, specific efforts as well as broad initiatives, such as those that facilitate cultural change, are considered. By recognizing, sharing, and celebrating successful initiatives, Catalyst provides organizations with replicable models to help them create initiatives that are good for women and good for business.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICES

ABOUT THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRACTICES DESCRIBED IN THIS REPORT

The Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Practices featured in this chapter are designed to illustrate Catalyst's recommendations. We define these practices as "programs, initiatives, or activities that support diversity and inclusion efforts in the workplace and are considered promising models for others to follow." In many cases, the D&I Practices detailed here describe one particularly relevant element of a broader practice. Certain D&I Practices have been assessed and evaluated against specific criteria for the Catalyst Award. Examples of Catalyst Award-winning initiatives are noted in the report.

DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

For women of color to feel more connected within the workplace, they need to feel more comfortable interacting with managers (e.g., with their supervising attorneys). The following practice describes part of a 2007 Catalyst Award-winning initiative at PepsiCo that promotes more authentic relationships between women of color and their managers through a structured dialogue program called Power Pairs®.

PEPSICO, INC.—*Women of Color (WoC) Multicultural Alliance*

2007 CATALYST AWARD-WINNING INITIATIVE

PepsiCo's Catalyst Award-winning initiative, *Women of Color (WoC) Multicultural Alliance* (the "Alliance") is a strategic support and resource group closely aligned with the business. The Alliance is a business imperative that focuses on the attraction, retention, and development of women of color within PepsiCo and specifically targets women of color in middle and senior management ranks. Early on, the Alliance wanted to address the feedback it had received about the challenges women of color faced in developing authentic relationships with their managers, and it recognized the importance of providing women of color with meaningful development experiences. One of the first elements put into place was a program called Power Pairs®. This customized coaching program for women of color, their immediate managers, and their "skip-level" managers (second-level managers) uses facilitated dialogue to build personal and professional relationships, help participants better understand others' work styles, professional interests, and career goals, and foster more authentic and honest relationships. Conversations should convey mutual expectations, identify gaps, and help participants collaboratively develop action plans for working together more effectively.

CREATING A MENTORING CULTURE

While law firms may offer junior lawyers the chance to connect with formal mentors, many firms have not yet successfully achieved a culture of mentoring. Indeed, our survey found that while about three-quarters of women of color said they had mentors, they did not feel these mentors could strongly influence their careers. To accelerate the careers of those from traditionally marginalized groups, law firms need to work aggressively on instilling mentoring as a core value. The following initiative adopted by one law firm illustrates such an approach.

GIBBONS P.C.—*The Women’s Initiative: Driving Success Through Diversity Investment*
2009 CATALYST AWARD-WINNING INITIATIVE

Many law firms recognize that innovative business solutions, such as a diverse attorney workforce with multiple perspectives and approaches, yield better results. These firms know that attracting and retaining women, who make up approximately 50 percent of law school graduates in North America, is critically important. Although many law firms acknowledge the importance of diversity and inclusion for business success, many struggle to implement programming that leverages diversity and builds an inclusive firm culture. This is evidenced by the dearth of women—especially women of color—at partnership levels. In law, the billable-hours model of business, the client-facing nature of work, and a historically male-dominated culture all present challenges for women. In this climate, too often women lawyers are expected to choose between a successful career at a firm and a meaningful personal life.

Founded in 1997, *The Women’s Initiative: Driving Success Through Diversity Investment* is a successful platform for advancing women and business by increasing women’s professional knowledge, improving their visibility as experts, providing access to networking and mentoring opportunities, helping women obtain valuable business development opportunities, and promoting the role of women in business. *The Women’s Initiative* not only provides a platform for success—through high visibility opportunities for women lawyers—but also the tools to be successful, through strong investment in internal development. By helping women and men attorneys establish, maintain, and expand close relationships with women clients, potential women clients, and colleagues from other industries who might refer business, Gibbons’ efforts are critical to the success of the firm and its lawyers.

Mentoring Circles

Widely valued leadership attributes, including coaching, respect for others and their contributions, a commitment to the community, flexibility, and authenticity support the culture of diversity, innovation, and respect. The initiative continues to influence firm culture. The mentoring culture at Gibbons ensures—through coaching and teaching—career path transparency and overall inclusion. The firm has several mentorship programs that function both independently and synergistically:

The Women’s Initiative’s women-only group mentoring, or “mentoring circles,” meet quarterly to discuss sensitive issues, personal and professional development strategies, and ways of balancing family and work. Mentors also assist with integration in all aspects of firm life, provide career counseling, and identify opportunities for growth. Significantly, women leaders are committed to supporting and coaching junior women.

The firm’s mentoring portfolio for all attorneys includes peer mentoring for associates and director-to-associate mentoring for all associates. Associates rely on these opportunities to obtain insight and advice from directors from across the firm and clarify expectations for advancement.

MONITORING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

As discussed in previous chapters, many women of color reported missing out on important assignments and developmental opportunities that could advance their careers. Firms need to be systematic in ensuring that women of color receive the opportunities necessary for advancement, including those that come about through networking with others at the firm. The following practice shows how one accounting firm has developed a more systematic approach to monitoring the fair distribution of assignments and ensuring greater accountability for achieving results.

ERNST & YOUNG LLP—*Employee Advocacy Through Career Planning and Mentoring*

Ernst & Young, a 2003 Catalyst Award Winner for its *Promoting Change: Developing & Advancing Women* initiative, recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusiveness as a key strategic driver for their business. The firm has had a strong history of promoting women and building inclusive environments in order to effect change. For example, its Career Watch program helps high-potential women and visible minorities reach their full career potential in the organization. Senior leaders serve as advocates for employee participants. They provide career advice, make sure the employee is known by other leaders in the firm, and help the employee develop and implement an action plan to achieve his or her career goals. The executives are also focused on ensuring that the employees in the program get challenging client assignments and other growth opportunities and have access to the right counseling and mentoring relationships. Career Watch is an organization-wide program, but Ernst & Young Canada's implementation includes adaptations to meet the particular needs of the Canadian region.

Career Watch began in 2003 when Ernst & Young noticed there were gaps in several areas, including retention and career progression of women and visible minorities. The primary objective of the program is to ensure women and visible minority professionals have access to the right opportunities that will develop their skills and build their networks in order to maximize their chances of promotion to partner. Career Watch is unique both in the seniority of the leaders who participate and in the advocacy role they play for their assigned employees. It is also an excellent planning tool as it allows senior leaders to get to know their talent in an in-depth way and understand who is in the partner pipeline.

There are as many as 200 participants in some Career Watch programs, with each senior leader being assigned one or a few employees. Ernst & Young Canada limits its program to 48 participants, with each leader being assigned six employees. The senior leader and employee meet several times a year to build rapport, engage in career goal conversations, and discuss the employee's interest in becoming a partner. Together they assess what the employee needs to focus on in order to be judged ready to be promoted to partner. Outside of Canada, employees and senior leaders are expected to follow up with each other every two months to ensure that the action plan is being implemented with satisfactory results. A managing partner follows up with the senior leaders as well. Within Canada, the senior leaders champion the implementation of all the actions and report back to the Career Watch Committee every

six months on progress. The eight senior leaders who comprise the Career Watch Committee, along with the firm's CEO and the leaders of the firm's Gender and Diversity Task Forces, meet for a full day twice a year to discuss and challenge the issues presented about each employee. From there, an action plan is created, as needed, to help improve the skills, business plan, and networking necessary for the employee to continue to develop.

Employees normally participate in the Career Watch program for two years before graduating, although this timeframe is flexible depending on the needs and goals of the employee. Career Watch has helped to retain Ernst & Young's talented women and visible minorities by ensuring that they have access to a range of opportunities to both develop their potential and bring success to the firm.

INCREASING WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS

To avoid imperfect execution of diversity programs and practices, law firms must raise awareness about the unique work-life challenges faced by women of color; the next step is to devise programs that meet their needs or to review and refine existing programs. Firms also need to redefine how work gets done and institute programs that emphasize flexibility as a business imperative. This will help create a culture where all lawyers feel more comfortable using firm resources intended to support work-life effectiveness.

Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP, a global law firm known as Sidley Austin LLP since 2006, ensures fair performance management and equitable distribution of employee development opportunities through its Catalyst Award-winning initiative called *Strategies for Success: An Ongoing Commitment to Diversity*.

Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP—*Strategies for Success: An Ongoing Commitment to Diversity*
2005 CATALYST AWARD-WINNING INITIATIVE

The formal, firm-wide reduced-hours policy enables attorneys, at both the associate and partner levels, to work a reduced-hours schedule. Associates who work a reduced-hours schedule remain on partnership track and are given evaluations and client assignments comparable to their full-time counterparts. The Women's Committee highlights that lawyers working reduced hours can also be highly accessible to clients; they simply may need to be assigned to fewer of them. The Compensation Committee continually reviews the evaluation and client assignment processes to ensure that all lawyers are gaining the same type of critical experiences, including exposure to clients. In addition, the Women's Committee regularly and formally communicates the practicality of reduced hours work through presentations that demonstrate management support, explain the policies, and provide tips for successfully working such a schedule.

Sidley's efforts have had a profound impact on the representation of women and people of color within the firm's senior ranks. While 22 percent of the lawyers promoted to partnership in 2002 were women, 43 percent of those promoted in 2004 were women. The representation of attorneys of color within the partnership increased from 6 percent in 2002 to 8 percent in 2004. In 2004, almost 18 percent of the total partnership was comprised of women.

Sidley Austin LLP continues to be successful in having part-time partners. In the years between 2003 and 2008, the firm promoted eight reduced-hours attorneys to partner and reported that these promotions served as both a retention and recruitment tool.⁵⁷ In terms of work-life quality for women lawyers, in 2008, *Working Mother* magazine named Sidley Austin one of the 50 best law firms to work for in the United States.

57. Katherine Bowers, "At Last...Part-Time Partners," *Working Mother*, (August/September, 2008): p. 62-68.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER REPORTS IN THE *WOMEN OF COLOR IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SERIES*

Re-examine the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts.

- Conduct regular health checks and assessments (pulse surveys, focus groups) to ensure diversity efforts are successful in addressing the distinctive experiences and challenges faced by women of color.
- Attempt to unravel and discuss any unwritten rules and norms that exist in the firm. This can serve to address disadvantages that women of color face simply because they do not know about these unwritten norms.

Communicate clearly regarding diversity objectives and related accountability mechanisms.

- Build authentic relationships between traditionally marginalized groups (such as women of color) and senior leaders in the firm by creating direct channels of communication.
- Outline diversity objectives, tracking mechanisms, and accountability tools for managers and senior leaders (e.g., metrics, scorecards, diversity performance linked to compensation/promotion).

Facilitate interactions among women of color and others in the workforce.

- Give women of color “forced” touch points when they are expected to interact with influential others in the firm. This can be done via formal mentoring programs, speed networking, and other strategic opportunities for visibility.

Aggressively open up client access and high-visibility assignments for women of color.

- Be aggressive and deliberate in identifying development opportunities for qualified women of color and in ensuring they have the knowledge, information, and support necessary for success.

Equip managers to “walk the talk.”

- Use managers as change agents by challenging them to better understand and respond to the unique situation experienced by women of color in the workplace.
- Hold managers accountable for the retention and development of their women of color subordinates.
- Equip managers with tools and platforms for building authentic relationships with women of color reports.

Dismantle perceptions of an “old boys’ club.”

- Examine subtle messages in the work environment that reinforce the existence of an “old boys’ club” and that perpetuate hidden biases toward traditionally marginalized groups, including women of color.
- Institute a zero-tolerance policy toward racial/ethnic stereotyping and sexist comments in the workplace; this sends a clear message to all employees firm leadership takes these matters seriously.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PROFILE

SAMPLE PROFILE

As shown in Figure 32, women of color made up 19.8 percent of the total sample in our survey of 25 top U.S. law firms. Of this sample group, 47.9 percent were Asian women, 32.6 percent were black women, and 19.5 percent were Latinas.⁵⁸ Across all demographic groups, close to 82 percent of the sample was at the “associate” level, followed by approximately 10 percent at the “equity partner” level; the rest included “counsel,” “non-equity partner,” and “other” levels. Also across all demographic groups, between 68 and 75 percent of the sample worked in the Litigation and Corporate practice areas. The remainder were distributed across Tax, Estates/Planning, Labor/Employment, Real Estate, and Other areas.

Figure 32: Sample Profile by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

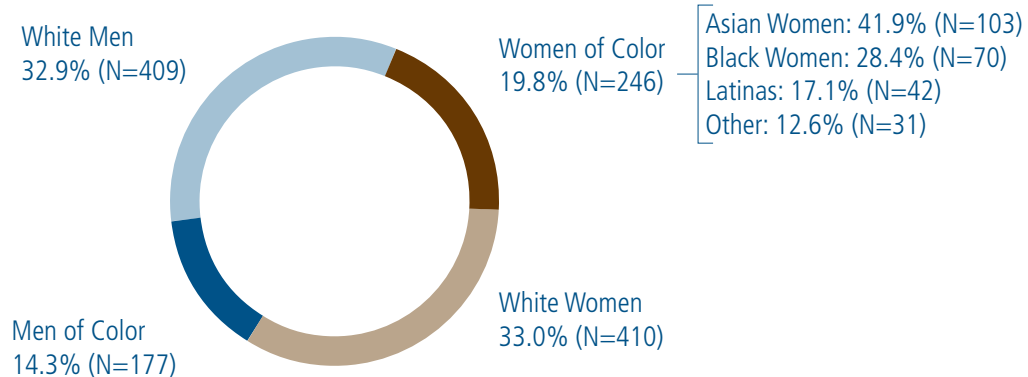


Table 2: Sample by Level and Practice Area

	Women of Color	White Women	Men of Color	White Men
Sample by Level				
Equity Partner (n=124)	9.4%	10.3%	9.6%	10.3%
Non-Equity Partner (n=27)	2.4%	1.7%	2.2%	2.5%
Counsel (n=50)	4.1%	4.2%	3.9%	3.9%
Associate (n=1011)	82.0%	81.6%	82.0%	81.6%
Other (n=25)	2.0%	2.2%	2.2%	1.7%
Sample by Practice Area				
Corporate (n=415)	29.9%	30.7%	46.0%	35.2%
Litigation (n=436)	39.0%	37.7%	28.7%	35.4%
Tax (n=51)	5.8%	3.7%	2.3%	4.5%
Other (including Estates/Planning, Labor/Employment, Real Estate) (n=312)	25.2%	28.0%	23.0%	24.9%

58. We plan to analyze in-depth findings related to specific racial/ethnic groups in subsequent reports.

Table 3: Sample Demographics and Occupational Characteristics

Sample Demographics	Women of Color	White Women	Men of Color	White Men
Age (mean years)	32.74	34.58	34.40	35.26
Married/With partner	53.7%	63.7%	58.0%	66.2%
Single	42.9%	31.7%	39.9%	30.2%
With children under 18 at home	28.8%	30.6%	28.2%	35.4%
With eldercare responsibility	15.6%	8.3%	14.1%	6.6%
With primary responsibility for dependent care	18.9%	22.9%	17.5%	14.4%
Spouse/partner working full-time (of those Married/With partner)	77.6%	81.3%	53.3%	39.7%
Speak a language other than English	71.2%	30.5%	63.8%	29.1%
Sample Occupational Characteristics				
M.B.A./L.L.M/Other graduate or professional degree	21.2%	26.1%	17.9%	34.8%
Organizational tenure (mean years)	3.55	6.96	3.49	4.93

Table 4: Annual Compensation by Title, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender Group

	Women of Color	Men of Color	White Women	White Men
Associate (mean)	\$211,856	\$225,527	\$226,504	\$235,538
	People of Color		Whites	
Partner (mean)	\$834,888		\$933,643	
Associate (mean)	\$217,485		\$230,779	

TECHNICAL APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

SURVEY

For the quantitative portion of the study, a survey tool was distributed to a sample of lawyers working at the top 25 (by revenue) law firms in the United States. Participating firms fielded the web survey between December 2007 and March 2008, and the surveys were open for two to four weeks at each firm. The survey was sent to a total of 2,939 individuals; a total of 1,242 responded, for an overall response rate of 42.3 percent.

SAMPLE: Catalyst worked with firms to ensure that the titles and practice areas of attorneys were comparable across firms. For the purposes of drawing the sample, practice areas were classified as: 1) Corporate, 2) Litigation, 3) Tax, 4) Labor/Employment, 5) Estate Planning, 6) Real Estate, and 7) Other. In these practice areas, titles included "equity partner," "non-equity partner," "counsel," "associate," and "other." Because women of color are underrepresented in law firms, Catalyst worked with the data vendor to construct a sample that included a substantial number of women of color, particularly at higher levels. After identifying the women of color sample, white women, men of color, and white men, subsamples were matched by title and practice area to create the final sample.

SURVEY TOOL: The electronic survey was distributed by a third-party data vendor, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The following information was collected:

- Organizational and position tenure.
- Level.
- Demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, class background, marital status, educational level).
- Perceptions of work environment/organizational culture.
- Satisfaction with career advancement.
- Perceived barriers to advancement.
- Supervisorial relationships.
- Mentoring relationships.
- Informal networks.
- Work-life quality.
- Perceived organizational diversity climate.

ANALYSES: For the most part, the data analysis compared the following race/ethnicity and gender groups:

- Women of color
- White women
- Men of color
- White men

We used the following statistical procedures ($p < .05$, unless otherwise specified) to compare these groups and to highlight the intersectionality experienced by women of color:

- Custom tables and chi-square tests of percentage differences.
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

There was a response bias in the men of color sample. The men of color tended to respond to the survey at more senior levels, resulting in underrepresentation of men of color at the associate level. The following weights were applied to bring the representation of men of color in line with levels of women of color:

Level	Men of Color Weights
Partner	.56
Non-equity partner	.47
Counsel	1.21
Associate	1.12
Other	1.18

MEASURES AND INDICES

The indices used in the survey tool, along with their reliability ratings, are provided below. Some items in the indices were reverse-coded, which means that the scale 1-5 was reversed in the coding process; these items are marked with an asterisk (*).

INTENT TO LEAVE INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.865

Respondents rated each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- In the next few months I intend to leave this organization.
- Within the next year I intend to leave this organization.
- In the next two to four years I intend to leave this organization.
- I am not seriously considering leaving at all. *

INCLUSIVITY INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.766

Respondents rated each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- I am subject to racial/ethnic stereotypes in my organization. *
- I am subject to sexist comments at my organization. *
- Many employees feel uncomfortable around members of my racial/ethnic group. *
- To fit in, a person of my gender and race/ethnic group must make adjustments. *
- Talking about race is considered taboo at my organization. *

ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.876

Respondents rated each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- My organization has diversity efforts designed to be supportive of racial minorities and women.
- Diversity efforts at my organization have created a climate supportive of women of color.
- Career development is an important part of diversity programs at my organization.
- Diversity efforts at my organization place too little emphasis on quality of work environment.*
- My organization's senior leadership demonstrates strong commitment to diversity by hiring qualified, diverse candidates.
- Managers are held accountable for development and advancement of women and racial/ethnic minorities.
- My organization's senior leadership demonstrates strong commitment to diversity by placing qualified women and racial minorities in key leadership positions.
- Managers receive adequate training about how to manage a diverse workforce.
- Diversity efforts fail to address subtle racial bias that may exist against members of my racial/ethnic group.*
- Diversity efforts fail to address subtle gender bias that may exist.*

SATISFACTION WITH EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.779

Respondents rated each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- I am satisfied with the career advancement opportunities in the organization.
- I believe I can compete successfully to advance in the organization.
- The level of work I am asked to perform relative to my years of experience is appropriate.
- I am satisfied with the compensation I receive for my job.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.709

Respondents rated each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- I am satisfied with the way in which client service assignments are distributed.
- I am satisfied with the extent to which I have access to working on high-profile client engagements.
- I have access to organizational budgets reserved for business development.
- The organization provides training opportunities for me to enhance my business development skills.

SUPERVISORY SUPPORT INDEX

Cronbach's Alpha=.909

Respondents were asked to assess their manager on each of the following items on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- Really cares about my well-being.
- Is willing to extend himself/herself to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
- Provides opportunities for visibility.

- Has high expectations of my performance.
- Helps me understand the politics of the workplace.
- Is comfortable interacting with me.
- Evaluates my performance fairly.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviews with senior partners in a subsample of participating U.S. law firms. We also conducted focus groups with women of color (Asian women, black women, and Latinas) in a subsample of firms. The protocols covered the following topics:

- Organizational culture (including work culture, attributes for fitting in, and social networking).
- Organizational structure (including reporting relationships, allocation of assignments).
- Career advancement at the firm (including career advancement model, difficult career points, and barriers faced by women of color).
- Diversity climate (including the context for discussing race/ethnicity, gender, and work-life effectiveness at the organization).

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59. The survey results reported here do not necessarily reflect the policies or experience of any particular firm that participated, and the opinions expressed here are those of Catalyst and the author and are not necessarily those of the Sponsors.

Women of Color in Professional Services Series

This series investigates the experiences of women of color in professional services firms, which are characterized by a client-service focus and entrenched “old boys” networks. For the first time, Catalyst benchmarks the experiences of women of color against other demographic groups to examine how different attributes and characteristics interact with one another and inform personal and professional identities, experiences, and expectations about privilege and disadvantage in the workplace.



Women of Color in U.S. Law Firms

Author: Deepali Bagati

Although women of color represented nearly one-quarter of all women associates in 2008, only 1.84 percent were partners. This study shows that, compared to white women, men of color, and white men working in law firms, women of color were most likely to perceive negative stereotyping; they were also most likely to feel that fitting into their firms' environment was a challenge.

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Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms

Author: Deepali Bagati

This report finds that women of color in U.S. securities firms risk experiencing a deceleration in their career trajectories as a result of the combined effects of race/ethnicity, gender, and birth country. With fewer connections and chances to shine, women of color advance at a slower rate than others, and, ultimately, many are faced with a “concrete” ceiling.

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Women of Color in Accounting

Author: Katherine Giscombe

With women and people of color receiving certification in accounting and joining the accounting industry at an increasing rate, firms are faced with the job of creating more inclusive environments in a traditionally white, male-dominated, “up-or-out” culture. However, women of color face many barriers, including lack of similar role models, stereotyping, a greater level of exclusion from networks, and difficulty in accessing high-visibility assignments and business development opportunities.

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Retaining People of Color: What Accounting Firms Need to Know

Author: Deepali Bagati

Competition for top talent is a critical issue for accounting firms. But this report finds that approximately 50 percent of people of color do not feel obligated to stay with their current firms. Furthermore, women of color are more likely to intend to leave for more money, to do similar tasks, than men of color. People of color underscore organizational fit and access to informal networks as prerequisites for advancement.

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