WOMEN OF COLOR IN CORPORATE MANAGEMENT: Dynamics of Career Advancement
Women of Color
in Corporate Management:
Dynamics of Career Advancement

Second in a series of reports from Catalyst's Women of Color in Corporate Management Study

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WHY THIS REPORT?

In the last several years, business leaders, the government, and the media have drawn attention to the changing demographics of the U.S. workforce. Compared to forty years ago, people of color and women are entering the workforce in greater numbers and are changing the face of the nation's corporate talent pool. According to the U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, from 1950 to 1990, representation of white women in the labor force increased from 24 percent to 35 percent and minority representation doubled to 15 percent.

While there has been workforce research performed on issues related to white women and to people of color generally, there has been a lack of research specifically focused on women of color. Based on findings from a pilot project and discussions with corporate advisors, Catalyst determined a need for a systematic approach to understanding the unique experiences of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American women in business careers. Such an approach would inform companies' efforts to manage and value an increasingly diverse workforce.
The women whose voices we hear in this report are blazing new territory for minority groups through their tenure in corporate America, and they are tomorrow's potential business leaders. Women of color in corporate management will be able to enhance their companies' success in overall business strategy, management of increasingly scarce resources, and the global marketplace by virtue of their unique talents and cultural diversity—if they are able to attain key leadership positions within their companies.

From a marketplace perspective, women of color are important to companies in tapping into the growing buying power of women-of-color consumers and business owners; these women reflect perspectives of customers and should help companies gain market share. It is in companies' best interest, then, to retain and promote talented women of color. More broadly, though, and perhaps more importantly, the valuable commodity of leadership is what will drive business forward.

This is the second in a series of reports from Catalyst in its landmark women of color in corporate management series. In the first report, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: A Statistical Picture*, sponsored by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Catalyst analyzed occupational and demographic information for women of color in managerial/administrative jobs as defined by the U.S. Census, and as compared with white men, white women, and people of color.
This was the first time that U.S. Census Bureau data on women of color in private-sector management had been brought together in a published report. It provided a quantitative framework within which an analysis of further survey data could be placed by Catalyst. The following key findings emerged:

- Women of color are under-represented in the managerial labor force vs. their participation in the total workforce.
- Women-of-color managers are under-represented in most of the highest-paying industries.
- Women of color, with the exception of Asian-Americans, earn less than white women; all women of color groups earn less than white men.
- Women-of-color managers earn less than their male counterparts in each racial group. The persistence of the wage gap between women of color and men of color dispels the myth that women of color are doubly advantaged by virtue of race and gender.

In the current report, we explore the dynamics behind the current status of women of color in management from the women's own perspectives, including the following:

- What does it take for women of color to succeed in corporate environments?
• What do women of color perceive as holding them back from further advancement?

• Do women of color perceive that opportunities for advancement have improved?

• What role has affirmative action played in their career development?

The U.S. Census data analyzed in Catalyst's *A Statistical Picture* covered a broad range of managers and administrators, as defined by the U.S. government, from first-line supervisors to CEOs, in businesses with annual revenues from $100,000 to $100 billion that employed from as few as ten people to more than 100,000.

In this report, we narrow our focus to career advancement dynamics and present findings here in a specific context. The sample in this study consists of women-of-color managers and professionals in *Fortune* 1000 companies who have worked for their companies for at least a year and are at least one job level above entry-level professional. We divided the sample into three levels of management based on reporting level: senior-level (1-3 levels below the corporation's CEO), middle-level (4-6 levels below the CEO) and lower-level (seven or more levels below the CEO) women.
METHODOLOGY

Catalyst began planning this *Women of Color in Corporate Management* study in 1995. In the spring of 1997, after securing funding from the Ford Foundation and a consortium of 17 corporations (Avon Products, Inc., Amoco Corporation, Deloitte & Touche LLP, Dow Chemical Co., E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Company, Eastman Kodak Company, General Motors Corporation, Home Box Office, Hoechst Corporation, IBM Corporation, Levi Strauss, Mobil Corporation, Motorola, Inc., Pitney Bowes Inc., Sara Lee Corporation, Sears, Roebuck and Co., and Xerox Corporation), we conducted a qualitative study at 15 *Fortune* 500 companies, holding more than 57 focus groups of entry- and mid-level women of color. We conducted 42 in-depth interviews with senior-level women of color, 9 interviews with CEOs, 12 interviews with human resources executives, 8 interviews with diversity managers, and 11 interviews with senior line executives. At this phase we also examined secondary research materials related to companies' diversity policies and programs.

Based on these results, Catalyst designed a survey on the career experiences of women of color. We recruited a geographically and industrially diverse sample of *Fortune* 1000 companies whose women-of-color managers and professionals would be surveyed. The industries represented included the following: petroleum refining; soaps and cosmetics; chemicals; mail, packaging, and shipping; motor vehicles and parts; retail; publishing; insurance; computers and office equipment; electronics and equipment; tobacco; food;
electronics and semiconductors; telecommunications; publishing; pharmaceuticals; scientific, photographic, and control equipment. Thirteen companies were in the Northeast, 12 in the Midwest, 3 in the West, and 3 in the South.

From November, 1997, through January, 1998, Catalyst mailed surveys to over 6,500 women-of-color managers and professionals, receiving completed surveys from a total of 1,735 women for a response rate of 25 percent. Of the completed surveys, 54 percent came from African-American women, 24 percent from Hispanic women, and 21 percent from Asian-American women.

Coupled with the focus groups and interviews, the number of companies involved, the wide range of industries, and the total number of participants, Catalyst believes this series to be unprecedented in the history of research on corporate women of color. Such a sample design ensures meaningful and generalizable results.

As in A Statistical Picture, the data about women of color are presented for three major subgroups: African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American.
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET AHEAD, AND WHAT IS HOLDING BACK WOMEN OF COLOR?

The women in the survey are consistent across ethnic groups about what it takes to get ahead in their corporations:

- obtaining high visibility assignments
- performing over and above expectations
- communicating well
- forging connections with influential others

Chart One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently Cited Factors to Receiving Promotions for All Women of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High visibility projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White women executives in a 1996 Catalyst *Women in Corporate Leadership* study were similar to these women of color in citing four of the same career advancement strategies as critical: consistently exceeding performance expectations; seeking high visibility assignments; having an influential mentor; and networking with influential colleagues.

However, in comparison, white women seem to feel that performance plays a stronger role in their career advancement than do women of color. Women of color rate exceeding performance expectations on par with other factors such as high visibility projects and having a mentor. The following quote from an African-American focus group participant exemplifies this sentiment:
As the first person in my family/generation to get a college degree, I never learned about exposure in informal ways. African-Americans are 20 years off in learning their way through the organizational culture—that it’s more than performance and education that leads to advancement.

(African-American woman manager)
Survey participants perceive themselves as qualified for the positions they hold and aspire to. Less than ten percent of the women surveyed cite a lack of qualifications—such as educational credentials, technical skills, or performance in general—as barriers to their advancement. Over half hold graduate degrees. It is clear that the vast majority of women of color believe that they satisfy the key criteria for getting ahead in their companies: performance above and beyond expectations, education, and skills.

However, women of color emphasize their lack of access to influential colleagues and hence to the high visibility assignments that would ensure fast-track career growth.

Chart Four

Barriers to Advancement for All Women of Color

- Not having an influential mentor or sponsor: 46.8%
- Lack of informal networking with influential colleagues: 39.8%
- Lack of company role models of same race/ethnic group: 29.4%
- Lack of high visibility projects: 27.9%
If people don’t perceive you as someone that can fulfill certain stretch targets or developmental opportunities, if they don’t feel that you’re competent to survive that test, then you won’t be given that first opportunity.

(Hispanic woman senior manager)

Access to opportunities is easier for white women because they share informal experiences with the power structure (live next door to each other, kids go to the same schools, husbands/brothers are head of something, etc.) as well as interests in activities like golfing...Networking is a game that not everyone plays; somebody has to ask you to play. But you have to recognize that there’s a game being played in the first place.

(African-American woman manager)

Many women of color find their career advancement suffers due to a lack of company role models of their own race/ethnicity. Such models may also serve as influential colleagues or mentors.
Chart Five

Barriers to Advancement for Women of Color by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not having an influential mentor/sponsor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of informal networking with influential colleagues</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of role models of same race/ethnic group</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of high visibility projects</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentoring Reported As Less Accessible to Women of Color than to White Women

While white women acknowledge the importance of mentoring to career growth, women of color are even more likely (29% vs. 47%) to cite lack of mentoring as a barrier to advancement.
Chart Six

Barriers to Advancement for White Women
(source: Women In Corporate Leadership study, Catalyst, 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male stereotyping and preconceptions</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of general management / line experience</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion from informal networks of communication</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hospitable corporate culture</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of mentoring</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It's easier for management to mentor those who are like them, so you get the same people rising through the organization and you don't see change.

(Hispanic woman manager)

Accessibility to mentors is easier for white women because of comfort level.

(African-American woman manager)
Mentoring A Factor in Senior-Level Women’s Success

More senior-level women of color have mentors than do the lower levels: for example, 50 percent of senior-level African-American women have mentors, compared with 37 percent of mid-level and 34 percent of lower-level African-American women. These senior women are less likely than lower-level women managers to cite a lack of mentoring as a barrier to advancement.

Chart Seven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presence of Mentor for Women of Color by Race and Level of Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I took a white male as a mentor for selfish reasons—I know that the world is white male, so I had to think and do as the white male so he would help me.

(African-American woman manager)
Cultural Background and Experiences Affect Advancement

There are some important variations in the reported barriers to advancement among ethnic groups, and some of these variations reflect differences in cultural background and experiences.

- Two-thirds of Asian-American women in the sample are foreign-born, and most of these did not come to this country until they were adults. Therefore, communication style is more likely to be a stumbling block in their career progress than for those with a longer history in the U.S. This may also explain why Asian-American women are more likely than the other groups to cite lack of informal networking with influential colleagues as a barrier to advancement.

Chart Eight

Communication Style As a Barrier for Women of Color by Race
Opportunities are different because it's assumed that you lack communication skills. I have to work harder to prove myself because I don’t speak English as well, but I can get my questions across.

(Asian-American woman manager)

- For Hispanic women, family commitments present slightly greater barriers to advancement than for those in the other groups (21 percent vs. 9 percent for African-American women and 17 percent for Asian-American women). This could be due to a cultural emphasis on traditional gender roles.

- Asian-American women are somewhat more likely than the other ethnic groups to cite lack of line experience as a barrier to further advancement (16 percent), vs. 8 percent for African-American women and 6 percent for Hispanic women.

Women of color have also spoken of a lack of exposure to corporate culture as a difficulty to be overcome.

I come into this culture and don’t know what to expect. My family weren’t professionals. I have to perform three times higher on top of that to be considered an average person. No one can help you figure out what’s what.

(Hispanic woman manager)
On the positive side, however, women of color have spoken of the additional drive exhibited by their peers:

*Culturally, the issue that you always deal with and struggle with is the issue of why you were hired. You just have to work extra hard. Which is one of the reasons I really do seek out minorities, because those that are really challenged and want to succeed drive themselves so much harder.*

(Hispanic woman senior manager)
WHAT IS THE RATE OF JOB ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN OF COLOR, AND HOW DOES THIS COMPARE WITH WHITE WOMEN?

One measure of upward mobility is length of time spent in a job grade. Across ethnic groups, the women of color we surveyed spend on average 3.6 years in a job grade. By comparison, white women appear to be promoted more rapidly. According to a 1993 Cornell University study, 2.6 years was the average length of time since last promotion for women of the predominantly white executive population.

Upper-level women-of-color managers in the Catalyst sample spend the shortest length of time in a job grade (about 3 years).

Chart Nine

Mean Length of Years in Job Grade for Women of Color by Race and Level of Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT PROGRESS IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT DO WOMEN OF COLOR SEE?

Given the United States’ rapidly changing economy and job market, it is important to understand labor force participants’ perspectives on their own changing opportunities. We asked survey participants to think about the last five years and to tell us whether job opportunities for women of their ethnic group have improved, stayed the same, or declined.

On the whole, the greatest number of respondents perceive that their opportunities have improved (47%), rather than stayed the same or gotten worse in the previous five years. However, a considerable number of these women perceive no changes in their advancement opportunities (38%).

While comparatively few women feel their opportunities have declined, African-American women are the most likely to report a decline in opportunities (16%), in comparison with Hispanic (10%) and Asian-American women (6%).
Chart Ten

Perceptions of Changes in Advancement Opportunities in Prior 5 Years for Women of Color

- Total for Women of Color: 38.2%
  - Improved: 46.8%
  - No Change: 12%
  - Declined: 12%
- Hispanic Women: 49.6%
  - Improved: 38.9%
  - No Change: 9.6%
- African-American Women: 47.9%
  - Improved: 33.4%
  - No Change: 16%
- Asian-American Women: 41.8%
  - Improved: 49%
  - No Change: 5.8%
Comparing these results with those of senior-level women in Catalyst’s 1996 study, *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects*, we find that white women are much more likely to believe that their opportunities have improved in the prior five years. Sixty percent of senior white women reported that their opportunities for advancement have improved somewhat or greatly over the last five years, versus 47 percent of senior women of color.
WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF SATISFACTION WITH PROSPECTS FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT, AND WHAT IMPACT MIGHT THIS HAVE ON CORPORATIONS?

A question arises from the preceding discussions: What is the current level of satisfaction with their potential for career growth, and how willing are women of color to wait for improvement?

Satisfaction with Opportunities for Advancement Lags Behind Satisfaction with Job

While many women of color are satisfied with their jobs overall (that is, with the content of the work they do), fewer are satisfied with their pay, and fewer still are satisfied with opportunities for advancement. Hispanic women are comparatively more satisfied than the other two groups.

Chart Eleven

Satisfaction with Current Job, Pay, and Advancement Opportunities Among All Women of Color
A bottom-line measure of interest to organizations is intention to remain with the organization. Most survey participants indicate they intend to stay, Hispanics being the most positive. However, 25 percent of the African-Americans indicate they do not intend to remain with their organizations. This is consistent with earlier findings that more African-American women believe that their opportunities have decreased in the last five years.

Noteworthy is that about one quarter of upper-level African-American women—those one to three levels below the CEO—indicate that they do not intend to remain with their corporations.
Chart Thirteen
Percent of Women of Color Who Do Not Intend to Remain at Company by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>24.5%</th>
<th>19.3%</th>
<th>16.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Fourteen
Percent of Women of Color Who Do Not Intend to Remain at Company by Race and Level of Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>upper</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE ROLE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN CAREER GROWTH

Looking further at what may have affected career opportunities for women of color, here we explore the perceived role of affirmative action in the professional lives of our participants.

There has been controversy over affirmative action's role in the careers of women and people of color, with some arguing that affirmative action has granted unfair advantages to minority groups in the areas of job placement, pay, job retention, and promotions. As documented in *A Statistical Picture*, women of color do not enjoy an advantage over white men or women, or men of color on the basis of pay or representation in the managerial labor force. Moreover, affirmative action may vary in its impact by stage of career cycle and its perceived salience to women varies by ethnic group.

About half of the women of color surveyed perceive that affirmative action has affected their careers in some way.

Comparisons with data from *Women in Corporate Leadership* indicate that white women are more likely than women of color to perceive that affirmative action has had no impact on their careers (44% vs. 32%). By contrast, according to the current survey, 55 percent of women of color believe that white women have benefitted more from internal company diversity programs, while 35 percent of women of color believe they have benefitted more.
Perceived Impact of Affirmative Action Varies by Ethnic Group

There are important differences among ethnic groups. African-American women are least likely (21%) to indicate that affirmative action has had no impact on their careers, compared to Hispanic (38%) and Asian-American (48%) women.

Chart Fifteen

Percent Agreeing that Affirmative Action Has Had No Impact on Career

The difference between the perceptions of affirmative action by African-Americans and the other subgroups might arise from their historical experiences.
Affirmative action has had a huge impact on my career. I was recruited for the plant’s affirmative action goals. Affirmative action is good because it makes people go beyond their comfort level. I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for affirmative action.

(African-American woman manager)

I do believe that no one gets opportunities within a vacuum. I mean they do that within the context of decision-makers who are operating in an organizational and societal culture. So that said, I have no question that affirmative action and EEO have helped along the way. I will also say though that it’s not that simple to attribute advancement to just one door being opened in that legal framework, but rather a combination of what I bring to the party and what the decision-maker wants to bring to the party by bringing me into the organization.

(Asian-American woman manager)

Affirmative Action is Perceived as More Helpful for Recruitment than Promotion

Women of color in all ethnic groups consider affirmative action more helpful at the job entry phase than it is for promotion, supporting anecdotal information concerning the limitations of affirmative action for career growth.
Chart Sixteen

Percent Agreeing that Affirmative Action Has Helped with Recruitment, Promotion; All Women of Color

The strength of feeling about the effects of affirmative action on recruitment and promotion varies by ethnic group. Consistent with the apparent greater salience of affirmative action for African-American women, they are the most positive, followed by Hispanic women and then Asian-Americans.

*Affirmative action does help in getting in the doorway, then, it's up to us to prove ourselves.*

(Asian-American woman manager)
Chart Seventeen

Percent of Women of Color Agreeing that Affirmative Action has Helped with Recruitment, Promotion; by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Recruitmen</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORPORATIONS

Catalyst’s findings from this research show that women of color, while largely satisfied with their jobs, are largely dissatisfied with their opportunities for advancement in their companies. This perceived lack of opportunity, no doubt, contributes to the numbers of women of color in this study who reported an intention to leave their current employers. However, the disparity in reported satisfaction with job and dissatisfaction with opportunities—especially notable for African-American women in the study—is a signal to corporate decision-makers: the loss of talented women of color is not inevitable if companies act now to eliminate perceived barriers to their advancement.

From a labor pool perspective, the representation of people of color in the workforce doubled between 1950 to 1990 (to 15 percent) and will constitute a growing percentage of candidates for entry-level management and professional positions in corporations. From a marketplace perspective, women of color are important to companies tapping into the growing buying power of women-of-color consumers and business owners; these women reflect perspectives of customers and help companies gain market share.

Catalyst's research shows that corporations can reverse disproportionate turnover of valued female employees by identifying barriers to their advancement and working strategically to enhance the opportunity structure for women.
The principal barriers to continued advancement in corporations reported by women of color in this survey are lack of access to influential managers and executives in their companies who can serve as mentors and sponsor their career advancement; lack of access to high visibility assignments; and lack of role models of their own race/ethnicity.

**Conduct Internal and External Benchmarking**

Corporate decision-makers should ascertain to what extent women of color in their organizations encounter these or other barriers as the first step toward retaining talented women of color. They also must focus on enhancing their opportunities for advancement into senior leadership roles. Internal research can provide companies data on:

- Turnover rates for women of color relative to other groups;
- Representation of women of color by level and functional areas;
- Time in grade/promotion rates relative to other employee constituencies;
- Job satisfaction; optimism about opportunities for advancement; and perceptions of women of color regarding success factors and barriers to continued mobility;
- Disparities in compensation that cannot be accounted for by tenure/experience/credentials of women of color relative to other employee groups.
In addition, an independent exit interview process can provide companies with data about why women of color left the organization, the new directions their careers have taken since their leaving, and what could have prevented their departure.

Implement Mentoring and Networks

Since lack of access to mentoring was identified by this study as a key concern for women of color, companies may need to provide greater access to potential mentors. A variety of approaches to mentoring are being used in companies that have recognized this need. A benchmarking process can help a company identify the mentoring model that is most likely to succeed in its culture/work environments.

Supporting the creation of a women-of-color employee network is another means by which companies can assist women of color to identify mentors and role models. Such a network may also serve as a liaison group for management to learn about the special concerns of this group and to monitor and assess the perceived impact of initiatives implemented to address those concerns.

Expand Recruitment Approaches

The lack of role models for women of color cannot be completely addressed by focusing on retaining and developing women of color at the low- to middle-levels of the corporate leadership pipeline. Some companies have taken the additional step of strategically recruiting women of color as advanced hires
to fill key positions in top leadership. Recruiting women of color for corporate director seats is another way companies can address the need for role models and mentors for women of color in their management pipelines.

Enhance The Succession Planning Process

Companies that have been successful at retaining and advancing women of color generally have recognized and addressed the need to integrate diversity and succession planning into a systematic and seamless process in which corporate executives and directors partner with HR and diversity professionals to plan and monitor the career progress of valued women of color. This requires commitment from the highest levels of corporate leadership, regular reviews, establishment of goals to increase representation and reduce turnover, and frequent articulation of the organization's commitment to women of color.

- Companies that have been successful in addressing the special concerns of women of color have accountability mechanisms in place that ensure that managers follow through on their responsibility to develop women of color in their business units.
• Rigid numerical targets, especially in smaller business units, create a reluctance on the part of male managers to promote their talent pool of women of color with other business units. A succession planning process that looks down and across functional silos will identify high potential women of color early enough to create and monitor individual development plans for such women.

Hold Managers Accountable

Identifying and articulating a business case for retaining and advancing women of color is critical to obtaining commitment from managers whose day-to-day behaviors can either positively or negatively affect the work environment of women of color and reduce the potential backlash from co-workers.

Research by Catalyst and other organizations shows that to expand opportunities for talented women to gain key experience, companies need to be willing to assign them to nontraditional positions and offer them "stretch" assignments, just as they have typically prepared high-potential men for executive leadership. For women of color to get the high visibility assignments and compete for senior leadership roles, companies must reward male managers for perceived “risks” associated with sponsoring and mentoring women of color.
Challenging Cultural Stereotypes and Assumptions

In assessing the need for specific initiatives to retain and develop women of color, companies need to recognize the following:

• While women of color share similarities with white women, they face unique organizational challenges. Companies should not assume that solutions in place to address the needs of white women are necessarily suitable for women of color.

• As this research shows, subgroups within the larger population of women of color may face unique challenges and may hold specific perspectives that may not be addressed by a single initiative. (For example, Hispanic women do not always consider themselves to be women of color.)
NEXT REPORT IN THE SERIES

The next report in the Catalyst series on women of color in corporate management will concern perceptions of corporate diversity policies and programs among women of color. It will focus on the degree to which each ethnic subgroup—Hispanic women, African-American women, and Asian-American women—finds that diversity programs address their group’s unique needs. This next study will be released later in 1998.
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The total number of survey respondents is 1,732 women. The racial breakdown of these respondents is described in the chart below.

Personal Characteristics

Race

Distribution of Survey Respondents by Race

- African-American: 53.5%
- Hispanic: 23.9%
- Asian-American: 21.1%

Age

The median age for the total number of survey respondents is 40. The median age within racial groups was 41 for African-American women and 39 for both Asian-American and Hispanic women.
Location of Birth

Percentage of Foreign-Born Respondents by Race

- Asian-American: 65.7%
- African-American: 4.7%
- Hispanic: 27.4%

Of the foreign born, 57.7 percent of Asian-American women and 29 percent of Hispanic women came to the U.S. at age 18 or over.

Education

Breakdown of Respondents' Level of Education

- Graduate and/or Professional degree: 50.7%
- Undergraduate Degree: 34.2%
- High School Diploma/some College: 14.1%
Education cont.

Breakdown of Respondents' Level of Education by Race

Asian-American Women
- 59.4%
- 31.4%
- 8.7%

African-American Women
- 32.9%
- 52.1%
- 14.2%

Hispanic Women
- 38%
- 41.4%
- 20.8%

Legend:
- Graduate or Professional Degree
- Undergraduate Degree
- High School Diploma/some College
Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Single</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With Children Under Age 18 At Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Professional Characteristics**

**Reporting Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Levels from CEO</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior (0-3 levels below)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid (4-6 levels below)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (7+ levels below)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Median Salary by Race and Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>$67,200</td>
<td>$93,700</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$58,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>$68,000</td>
<td>$95,300</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$59,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>$67,200</td>
<td>$85,800</td>
<td>$73,400</td>
<td>$59,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$98,500</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$55,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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