Chapter 6

Re-Complicating Intersectionality Considering Differences in Language and Personality Type When Considering Strategies for African American Women's Career Development

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to use mini case studies as a method to explore how diversity in race and gender can affect the work-lives and career trajectories of African American women, and to suggest individual and organizational strategies

to facilitate career growth of individuals whose identities intersect with multiple forms of diversity. This chapter will begin with a discussion of Black feminist thought and then proceed to discussions of research regarding African American women in the American workforce, personality type differences and linguistic diversity, and then proceed to a mini case study-based discussion of how these various forms of difference can dynamically interact to form highly nuanced sets of obstacles for African America women and other protected class categories whose identities intersect with one or more intersectional identities. Finally, the authors conclude with a discussion of coping and resistance strategies to improve the career trajectories of African American women.

INTRODUCTION

The Human Resource Development literature has seen increasing attention paid to how race and gender affect career trajectories and experiences with leadership (Beckwith et al., 2016; Byrd, 2009, 2014; Hughes, 2014). The discipline also has bodies of literature around how differences in personality types and linguistic diversity affect how employees relate to their organizations (Afshan et al., 2015; Dozier, 2017; Du Bois, 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2012; Turban et al., 2017). As of March 2015, there were only four African American males and one African American female CEOs in Fortune 500 companies. As of 2018, there are 24 women total and only 3 African American CEOs in Fortune 500 companies. All current Fortune 500 African American CEOs are men and the first and last Fortune 500 African American CEO was Ursula Burns, former CEO of Xerox, who stepped down in early 2017. Leadership characteristics that are traditionally deemed admirable are often viewed as undesirable in women, especially women of color and particularly African American women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). These biases position African American women negatively and ultimately affect their social position in the workplace by preventing them from being considered for leadership roles. Similarly, African American women and women of color who are linguistically diverse or who have introverted work styles are at a disadvantage in American workplaces which frequently stigmatize diversity in all of these areas.

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