Valuing Diversity: Unpacking Variation in Public Manager Perspectives

Leonor Camarena & Mary K. Feeney
Center for Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy Studies (CSTEPS)
Arizona State University

Does my organization value diversity? Perspectives from local government managers

Key Findings

- **Women** experience diversity differently than men.
- **Organizational type** is important. Managers in the mayor's office and police departments are more likely to report their organizations value diversity as compared to other city departments.
- **Job satisfaction** is positively correlated with reporting one's organization values diversity.
- **City environment** matters - Managers working in more diverse cities report more negative perceptions of their organization's valuing diversity.

Introduction

Administrators in public organizations often actively work to advance the interests of and outcomes for diverse groups (Sowa & Selden, 2003). While we know that managerial acceptance of diversity policies is important for successful implementation of diversity management programs, we know little about what explains whether managers report their organization values diversity. **This research aims to understand the factors that shape public managers' perceptions of organizational values on diversity.** We investigate how community engagement, external stakeholders, city composition, organizational type, and managerial demographic characteristics are related to public organizations valuing and prioritizing diversity.

Values: Hiring women & minorities

My organization values recruitment of qualified women:

Male Respondents:	**YES (55%)**	NO (45%)
Female Respondents:	YES (26%)	**NO (74%)**

My organization values recruitment of qualified minorities:

Police:	**YES (74%)**	NO (26%)
Mayor's Office:	**YES (56%)**	NO (44%)
Parks & Recreation:	YES (40%)	**NO (60%)**
Finance:	YES (36%)	**NO (64%)**
Community Development:	YES (32%)	**NO (68%)**

Factors explaining organizations valuing diversity

Model: Ordinary Least Squares regression of relationships between individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics on managerial perceptions of organizational culture that values and prioritizes diversity

Environment
% Bachelors +
% White -

Organization
Nongovernmental influence +
Mayor's office +
Police +

Individual
Women –
Graduate degree –
Job satisfaction +

Dependent Variable
Perception that organization values & prioritizes diversity
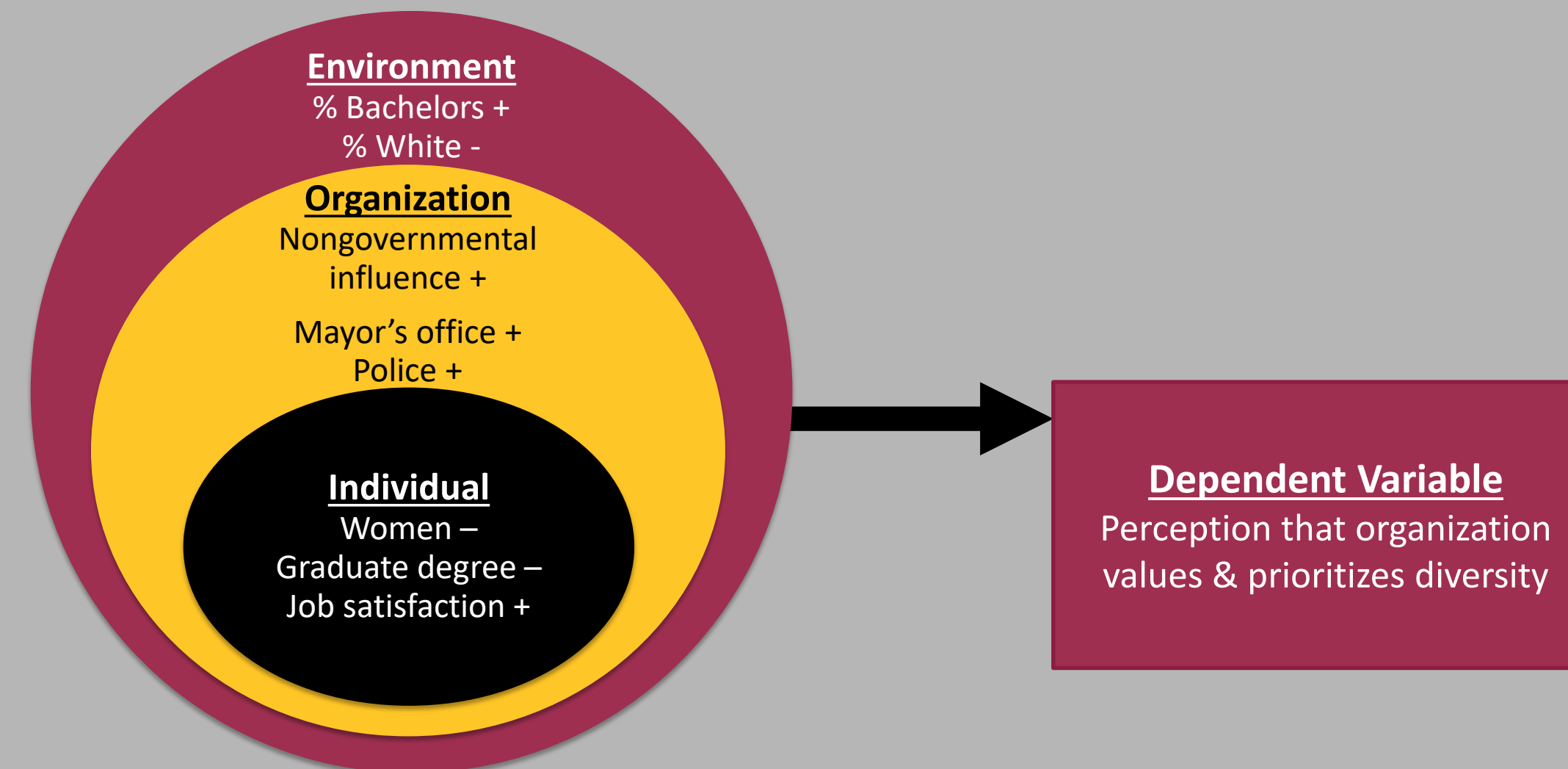
Individual
- Women are significantly less likely than men to report the organization values diversity.
- Managers with a graduate degree, as compared to those with less education, are less likely to report that their organization values and prioritizes diversity.
- Job satisfaction is positively and significantly related to the dependent variable.

Organization
- External influence from nongovernmental stakeholders is positively related to reporting that the organization values and prioritizes diversity.
- Managers in the mayor's office and the police department are significantly more likely than managers in other departments (community development, parks and recreation, and finance) to report that their organization values and prioritizes diversity.
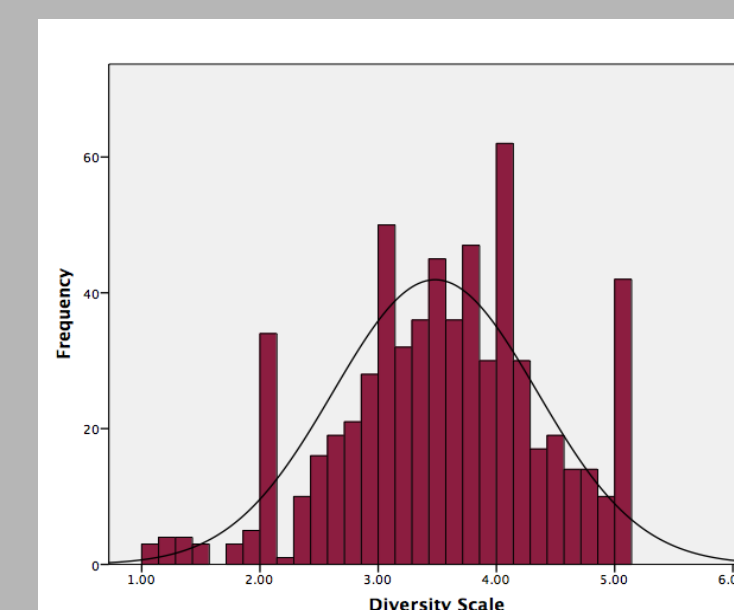
Environment
- Reports that the organization values and prioritizes diversity are positively related to working in a city with higher levels of education (measured as percent of the population with bachelors degree) and cities that have more racial diversity (e.g. higher percent of non-white population).

Dependent Variable

To what extent do you think your organization values and prioritizes the following?

1. The advancement of women
2. Sensitivity about racial diversity
3. Ensuring that minority communities are represented in decision making
4. Actively recruiting qualified minorities for employment
5. Ensuring that there is greater and more equitable access by minorities to programs and services
6. Actively recruiting qualified women for employment
7. Providing information to policy makers to assist them in making decisions concerning minority community needs and perspectives

Response Categories: 1=to a very small extent, 5=to a very large extent
Cronbach's Alpha: .919

Conclusions

The results show that individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics condition perceptions about local government organizations valuing diversity. While legal policies and programs exist to promote diversity and diversity hiring in government organizations, organizational culture remains an important component of promoting diversity. Women managers are significantly more likely to report that their organization does not value diversity, as are more educated managers and those working in more diverse cities. Meanwhile influence from nongovernmental stakeholders and job satisfaction increase manager reports that their organization values diversity.

Managers working in more diverse cities report more negative perceptions of diversity values in their organizations likely because their expectations are higher; because they work in diverse cities, they expect local government to be more diverse. Similarly, women report lower organizational valuing of diversity because they experience gender bias from organizations more clearly. **The misalignment between expectations and experience lead to more negative views of the organization valuing diversity.** Future research should focus on the factors that influence organizational culture toward diversity, in particular how managers develop expectations and perceptions of that culture.

Sample Framework

C-STEPS National Study of Technology in City Government 2016

Online survey administered to **2,500 local government managers** in **500 U.S. municipalities** with populations ranging from **25,000 to 250,000**. Managers from **5 departments** in each city were invited to participate: Community Development, Finance, Parks & Recreation, Police, and Mayor's office.

Useable responses from **667 managers** from **386 municipalities**

Response rate: **30%**

Responses collected from 154 deputy police chiefs, 151 directors of parks and recreation, 156 directors of community development, 117 directors of finance, and 88 administrative heads in the Mayor's office

613 managers responded to the questions on diversity

25% of respondents are **women**

14% of respondents are **non-white**

Respondent age ranges from **28 to 75,** with an **average of 52**

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