

# John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

## forum proceedings

### The State of Workforce Diversity 2015

by Robb C. Sewell

#### Overview

**O**n April 23, 2015, the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development's Office of Diversity Studies convened its sixth annual workforce diversity forum. Ninety people attended, including chief diversity officers; corporate executives; representatives from higher education, national and state governments, foundations, and national associations; policymakers; employers; consultants; labor unions; graduate students; and other interested individuals.

Presentations focused on workforce diversity and inclusion in Australia and how remarkable women lead. An expert panel discussion addressed the topic of shaping diversity in the global workforce and within society.

Speakers in order of appearance:

- > **Dr. Carl Van Horn**, Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Director, Heldrich Center, Rutgers University;
- > **Robert L. Lattimer**, Senior Fellow, Diversity Studies, Heldrich Center, Rutgers University;
- > **Dr. Lucy Taksa**, Professor of Management and Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University;
- > **Joanna Barsh**, Director Emeritus, McKinsey & Company;

- > **Dr. Nancy DiTomaso**, Professor, Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick, Department of Management and Global Business;
- > **Ann Lee-Jeffs**, Green Chemistry Program Manager, ACS Green Chemistry Institute; and
- > **Angela Guy**, Senior Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion, L'Oréal USA.

[View photos from the event.](#)

#### Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Carl Van Horn welcomed the forum participants and commented that the Heldrich Center has been focusing on the topic of diversity and inclusion for many years through numerous initiatives and events. Van Horn thanked the program's financial sponsors, Pat David, JPMorgan Chase and Anthony Carter, Johnson & Johnson. He also singled out a few participants, including Jim Florio, former Governor of New Jersey (1990 to 1994) and Barbara Lee, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rutgers University, who partnered with the Heldrich Center about 15 years ago for an event about women in the workforce. He then turned the program over to Robert L. Lattimer.

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## **Program Context and Objectives**

Lattimer acknowledged Van Horn's role in helping to shape the future of workforce diversity policy by establishing the Office of Diversity Studies at the Heldrich Center. Since 2010, the Office of Diversity Studies has convened an annual forum on workforce diversity. Lattimer stressed that these forums are designed to present leading-edge research, best practices, and solutions for workforce diversity. The forums provide an opportunity for experts, scholars, practitioners, and researchers to present their ideas, thoughts, and concepts on the topic no matter how provocative the viewpoint may be.

Lattimer then introduced the forum's featured speakers and panelists. Next, he welcomed the program's first speaker, Dr. Lucy Taksa, Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

## **Featured Address — Workforce Diversity and Inclusion in Australia: Issues and Gaps, Trends and Conundrums — Dr. Lucy Taksa**

Taksa began her presentation by discussing the work of Christine Legarde and her emphasis on the "three Ms" — mediocrity, momentum, and multilateralism. Taksa emphasized that mediocrity is underpinned by superficiality and selectivity, which hinder inclusion.

Taksa discussed some of the differences and similarities between the United States and Australia. Both countries and their economies have been shaped by immigration. In fact, there has been rapid growth in immigration in recent years in Australia. Just as in the United States, the changes in immigration in Australia have led to discussions about immigration and skills, and have resulted in

widespread sentiment that immigrants are taking jobs from nationals.

She then discussed some of the Australian reforms and how some were geared to ensuring equal wages for women. Nonetheless, male workers in Australia today still outnumber female workers, with the women's full-time work participation rate only increasing by 10% since 1970. Also, women in Australia are paid less than their male counterparts (an average of \$298 less per week).

Taksa discussed some of the critical policies on antidiscrimination and multilateralism in Australia over the past century. Opposition to segregation and discrimination ultimately created the momentum for change, including the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act in 1975, which set the foundation for human rights and sexual harassment protections, and the Commonwealth Racial Hatred Act in 1995, which added new laws dealing with racial hatred and discrimination.

Taksa stressed that diversity management and cultural diversity are assets, but that diversity management has a narrow focus: racial discrimination and gender. She said that despite lots of talk about multilateralism in Australia, multilateralism is not being effectively handled in the workplace. As a result, multilateralism in Australia is in a fragile state. Over the past year, racism has been on the rise. Additionally, indigenous and migrant workers are mired in low-paid contingent work, while corporate boards are dominated by white Anglo-Australian men.

She then discussed Australia's anti-racism strategy, which includes a web-based toolkit on assessing multilateralism in the workplace. However, she is concerned that this strategy is no more than a marketing tactic. Additionally, while there are significant anti-racism efforts happening at the macro level in Australia, these efforts are not trickling down to the organizational level and there are no guarantees that frontline managers will embrace the strategy and change their practices.

Taska then discussed some national innovations in terms of women in the workplace. For instance, reporting guidelines have been changed so that employers report how many women are employed

and serve on boards. However, this information is not **required** by the Australian government. Rather, the government **recommends** that employers provide these details.

Another innovation has been the launch of mentoring programs. Limited scholarships are provided to board-ready women so that they can enroll in training courses.

As a result of these and other efforts, Australia has seen an increase in the number of women who serve on corporate boards. However, these changes aren't being seen in the federal government. At present, only two women serve in the Australian federal cabinet. Additionally, there are no policies in development to address the wage gap between men and women or to build a pipeline of emerging female workers and leaders.

Taksa said that while Australia is seeing successes in diversity, those changes are not widespread and are slow to happen. She emphasized that Australia needs to focus on developing leaders and weaving together both diversity and inclusion, and not just solely focusing on diversity.

She said that society must recognize complexities and ambiguities in order for change to occur. For authenticity to occur, we need structures of collaboration, we must build trust and recognize that trust takes time to develop, and we must ensure accountability in the form of key performance indicators.

Taksa then referenced the late Roosevelt Thomas Jr., who had outlined four stages of diversity management:

1. Having representation,
2. Managing relationships,
3. Managing workforce diversity, and
4. Managing all strategic diversity mixtures.

She said that Australia is stuck at the first two stages of diversity management because companies lack continuity in diversity roles. Additionally, legal remedies and management, racial issues, and women's issues are contributing to the continuing mediocrity.

Following her presentation, Taksa fielded questions from the audience. One audience member asked for the definition of a casual employee. Taksa said that casual workers are paid by the hour and are not contractual.

Another participant asked Taksa about what she believes has led to the changes in Australia. Taksa said that there is a huge debate in Australia regarding quotas and targets. The growth in the number of women on corporate boards involves established women leaders who are already known and trusted. There is a great demand in Australia for new women leaders as evidenced by the country's scholarship program for women leaders. Over 3,000 women applied for the 70 scholarships that were available. She said that there might be a need for mandated reporting as opposed to the current recommended reporting structure.

Yet another forum participant asked Taksa if she views gender and equity issues through the lens of the United States, and what promising changes she sees in Australia. Taksa said that it's not possible to look at Australia's gender and equity issues through the United States' lens. What has happened in the United States has been far more volatile and violent than the actions in Australia. In terms of change, she said things are improving for indigenous Australians in the cities, but that Australians in the northern territory are still at a major disadvantage.

Another participant addressed the wage gap between men and women and said that research has shown that some women don't negotiate higher salaries. The participant wondered if that was an issue that Australia has examined. Taksa explained that jobs are more structured in Australia than in the United States. Some jobs are geared toward women, while other jobs are meant for men. The mindset between men and women is also very different in Australia. The mindset of men is "I want this, I want that" when they're hired for a job or offered a promotion. However, the mindset of women is akin to "Great! I've got a job." Thus, most women in Australia don't negotiate for higher salaries, more vacation time, and other job perks.

Download Taksa's presentation.

## Featured Address — How Remarkable Women Lead — Joanna Barsh

Joanna Barsh began her presentation by stating that the model of centered leadership — a balance of physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual strength that drives achievement and inspires others to follow — isn't just beneficial for women; it's good for both female and male employees.

Barsh then shared information about her background. When she turned 50, she realized that despite the fact that she had been successful in her career, she was not happy and felt empty. She felt invisible when others walked into the room. These insights motivated her to study other female workers and leaders. She began interviewing women throughout the world to learn their stories and experiences.

Her research led her to conclude that women have the same attributes of leadership that men possess but that they don't always have the same access that men enjoy.

She then conducted interviews of 200 men and women and looked at academic research on leadership. She found that women bring emotion to work and to leadership, that they create a sense of community and belonging more than men, that they stress the importance of ownership, and that they understand the necessity of energy management. She also found that women are more risk averse than men. Ultimately, her employer, McKinsey & Company, developed leadership training programs that were field tested and refined.

Barsh stated that leadership starts with each person and that recognizing that fact can lead to system change. She then talked about five leadership capabilities:

1. Meaning,
2. Ability to frame/reframe,
3. Connecting and building trust,
4. Engaging, and
5. Energizing.

Meaning is about what truly matters and what makes you happy. She said that it is important to build on one's strengths, as opposed to one's weaknesses. She encouraged participants to look for their strengths and cautioned that they may need to reconnect to their childhoods to find their strengths.

She stated that when women don't stand up for what they believe in, fear is at hand. She told participants that when they're fearful, the best thing to do is to pause. Take time to breathe, think about your physicality, and separate the facts from assumptions. Those steps can help you overcome the fears that can paralyze your actions.

She also said that reliability, congruence, openness, and acceptance will help others to trust you as a leader. She said that when you're unable to accept, you become a micromanager.

Barsh next talked about the importance of **mentors**, who will help you learn so that you can do better on the job. However, mentors will not help you get to the top. What will help you get to the top are **sponsors**. Sponsors will not only help you, but also encourage you to take risks, push you to grow, and spur you on to push past your boundaries.

Barsh also talked about challenges. She said it is critical to start with the upside of a challenge as opposed to the downside. Starting with the upside may lead you to a different answer.

She discussed our inner critics, who are designed to preserve our safety. It's important to realize that our inner critic is trying to help us, but because of our mindset, we allow our inner critic to stop us. It's important to listen to all of the voices speaking to you — the dreamer, the sage, the coach, the wise mother, among others. They will help you and bring you courage, confidence, and respect.

She also addressed the leadership capability of being energizing in terms of body, mind, heart, and spirit. She said that people deplete their energy every 90 minutes and that it is important to replenish that energy in order to be productive. She challenged participants to consider what increases their energy outside of work and then implement those

energy-renewing tactics at work. She said that the way back to high performance is through low positive energy, like a stroll outside or walking up or down a flight of stairs. Recovering one's energy only takes about 10 minutes so it's worthwhile to block time into your daily schedule to reclaim your energy.

Barsh concluded her presentation by recommending that forum participants visit [www.leanin.org/education/](http://www.leanin.org/education/) for useful videos on centered leadership and other topics.

Following Barsh's presentation, she answered questions from the audience. One individual asked how to persuade women to be more accepting of others so that they're better sponsors. Barsh replied that women have less reputational capital than men. Therefore, there are fewer women sponsors because they simply cannot afford to fail. If you consistently and authentically appreciate women leaders for their leadership, they will eventually hear your appreciation. However, it's critical that you don't pay lip service when telling them they're doing a good job. Back up your gratitude with facts about their performance.

Another participant inquired if there is any research on women managing women. Barsh said that workers judge the women managing them more harshly than their male supervisors. She cautioned that change starts with each individual and that it's not possible to change another person. If your female supervisor is in a foul mood, don't rush to generalities but consider if something is happening that is upsetting her. Accept her as she is and show empathy.

A participant raised the subject of emotion in the workplace. Many people say women are emotional on the job but the participant's experience has shown that men are more emotional, especially in terms of anger. The participant asked for Barsh's thoughts on this matter. Barsh said that there is no research that confirms whether men or women are more emotional on the job. However, she said that women **need** more emotion at work. Men are less self-aware on the job when it comes to their emotions. They don't recognize their emotions or express their emotions in the same way that

women do. Women, however, feel a strong need to acknowledge their emotions in the workplace.

Download Barsh's presentation.

## Panel Discussion — Shaping Diversity in the Global Workforce and Society

Dr. Nancy DiTomaso started the panel discussion by talking about her book, *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism*. She explained that she was perplexed as to why there was so much racial inequality in America when no one claimed to be racist. Thus, she conducted a research study that resulted in the aforementioned book. She interviewed several hundred people in three different parts of the United States about their views of racial inequality and fairness. She found that 99% of the interviewees had gotten 70% of the jobs because someone had helped them. She explained that favoritism (white people doing good things for other white people) causes racial inequality. She said that individuals don't see the rationale to change their behavior in this regard because they don't realize that they're engaging in behavior that may have a negative effect on others. She stressed that there is not enough attention given to how whites help each other in society and thereby disadvantage minorities.

Next, Ann Leff-Jeffs discussed how the Asian community is considered a model minority. She provided some of her educational and career background and mentioned that being an Asian woman with an engineering degree helped land her an excellent job right out of college. She focused on the importance of education in advancing her career and explained that she didn't find her race and gender to be an issue until she was in her forties. It was then that she started asking herself questions like "Why aren't I getting important projects like my white counterparts?" and "Why was I passed over for that promotion?" She also addressed career shifts, something that was common amongst many of her peers. She stressed that this is not a trend that is only common to minorities, but one that

happens to individuals from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Career demands often require individuals to shift careers or jobs or step back from their careers to focus on their families.

Angela Guy then provided some background about herself. She is one of 60% of African American women who is employed and 29% of African American women who has a Bachelor's degree or higher. She is one of 35% of African American women who has a managerial or professional career and one of 45% of working African American women who heads up her own household. Additionally, she is one of 75% of African American women who has children in the household under the age of 18. All of these facts influence her as a woman, a worker, and a leader.

Following Guy's comments, the panel answered questions from the audience. One audience member asked if we're diminishing women's achievements by adhering to quotas. Guy said that she grew up during the Affirmative Action era and that she knows that she would not be in her role today if it were not for governmental policies. Nonetheless, her employers still expected her to succeed in her position. In fact, those expectations were often higher for her as a minority than they would have been for a white person.

Guy mentioned how men dominate in leadership at L'Oréal USA despite the fact that a large portion of the employees are women and the majority of its clientele are female. Nonetheless, her company has a strong need to hire additional male employees. The bottom line is that L'Oréal USA has a business need and uses data to fill its employment gaps and to ensure fairness and equity.

Taksa said that there are national discourses about quotas and targets and that they are framed differently in many different countries. She said that a premise exists that merit is neutral but significant research shows that merit is not neutral. Barsh added that quotas are often the only way to accelerate meaningful change.

Lattimer stressed that he is an advocate for goals as opposed to quotas and discussed the differences between the two. Goals require measurable evidence-based data that facilitate the hiring and progression of diverse talent in an organization. Quotas set up a fixed number of required hires, which could establish the notion of one being viewed as not being qualified for the position.

Another forum participant said that whether we call them quotas or targets, the fact is that they exist. Thus, how do you respond to those who say that they shouldn't exist? DiTomaso referenced a book on desegregation, which found that not only have white men retained the advantages of the best jobs, they've also continued to receive even greater advantages. The bottom line is that quotas and targets have not lessened access to jobs for white men in the years since the civil rights act was passed. Additionally, there is no evidence that quotas have disadvantaged whites. Barsh added that the best way to combat the negative views of quotas is for CEOs to identify and share success stories in their organizations, which might lead to further successes and positive behavior.

Finally, an audience member asked if the shortage of financial resources has affected attempts to adhere to the new policies in Australia. Taksa said that regardless of the economic situation, the business climate makes these changes permissible. There is pressure to hire more women in Australia and despite the economic constraints, more women are being hired.

## Closing Remarks

Lattimer then brought the question-and-answer session and forum to a close. He again acknowledged Pat David of JPMorgan Chase and Anthony Carter of Johnson & Johnson, the attendees, and the speakers for their participation and acknowledged the Heldrich Center's administrative and communications staff for their support of the event.

## About the Heldrich Center

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, is a dynamic research and policy center devoted to strengthening the nation's workforce. It is one of the nation's leading university-based centers dedicated to helping America's workers and employers respond to a rapidly changing 21st century economy.

The Center's motto — "Solutions at Work" — reflects its commitment to offering practical solutions, based on independent research, that benefit employers, workers, and job seekers. The Center's policy recommendations and programs serve a wide range of Americans at all skill levels.

Learn more about the Heldrich Center at <http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu>.