This session will focus on processes of workplace age, race and gender inequality and exclusion, and the interplay of structural and cultural processes in both reifying and remedying inter group inequalities and boundaries.

We will begin by presenting a relational theory of workplace inequality that highlights the role of culture and cognition in shaping and legitimizing social closure and exclusion at work. This includes a brief synopsis of current knowledge on core mechanisms and a discussion of how and why a more relational approach improves upon current thinking. Each presenter will then develop a specific theoretical argument about culture and exclusion and illustrate it drawing from two respective projects, described in the following abstracts.

Bureaucratic legitimation and race-, sex- and age discrimination
Vincent Roscigno

Research on inequality and inclusion/exclusion in organizations typically (1) assumes constraining effects of bureaucratic structure on the capacity of powerful actors to discriminate, and/or (2) reverts to almost purely individualistic interpretations that emphasize 'bad apples' or unconscious biases. Such orientations neglect legitimating discourses and rationales that frame unfair treatment as neutral, meritocratic, or even organizationally good.

In this presentation, I draw from unique narrative data, specifically employer explanations for discriminatory conduct, in arguing that relational processes—by which I mean personal interactions but also relations relative to organizational proscriptions and culture, broadly—are essential for understanding the dynamics of workplace exclusion. While the appeal to formal meritocratic policies and criteria is quite common, significant variations in legitimation also emerge from the findings: business logics of "organizational restructuring" and "business efficiency" are commonly invoked by employers in cases of age discrimination; racial discrimination is more likely to be justifiable in terms of worker misconduct; and, for sex discrimination, particularly that related to pregnancy and maternity, employers rely more often on arguments about on worker dependability.

The exploration of such discourses is essential, I suggest, for understanding cultural elements of inequality production within organizational environments.

Linking micro and macro sources of inequality at work: Cognitive biases and organizational structures.
Alexandra Kalev

Much current research on bias in employment focuses on decision makers and moments of decision making. It is for this reason that attempts to limit bias and stereotypes tend to call for: (1) formalizationof personnel procedures so decision makers are held accountable, or (2) educating decision makers and creating incentives to keep them from discriminating. Evidence on the effectiveness of such strategies is, however, mixed at best.

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GLOBALIZED CATEGORIZATION BORDER-CROSSING
DEMOGRAPHIC PLURI-METHODICAL RECOGNITION COMPLEX NARRATIVE
URBAN MULTIPLE POPULATION PHENOMENON VARIABLES CULTURE
SEGREGATION COMPLEXITY DYNAMISM ORGANIZATIONS MARKETS
WORLD INTEREST

Karlshochschule
International University

Th!nking
Diversity

2nd International Conference on Narrative & Innovation
20th+21st September, 2012
Karlshochschule International University
Karlsruhe, Germany

In this presentation I use a relational theory of discrimination to move beyond looking at cognitive biases at isolated moments of decision making. I use a relational approach to discrimination to argue that ongoing intergroup relations at work operate as a source of bias and that the structural and cultural contexts can reduce such discrimination. I review research from sociology and social psychology showing that the modern labor process creates structures and cultures wherein interactions enhance gender, racial and ageist stereotypes.

I then show how recent transformations in the organization of work can promote structures and cultures that enhance inclusionary—rather than exclusionary—intergroup relations at work.

Following the presentations, Professors Roscigno and Kalev will moderate and invite session attendees to discuss their own projects and project developments relative to the theoretical and empirical points of the session. Especially poignant topics for attendee discussion include the relevance of cultural and narrative approaches for the study of inequality, the "relational" dynamics and character of work and institutional life, and the structural and bureaucratic foundations that support or ameliorate inclusion and exclusion.

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