

Parallels between the Glass and Lavender Ceilings

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Abstract : Researchers, businesses, and governments study the glass ceiling faced by women and members of minority groups at work, but the experiences of gay men, lesbians, and bisexual men and women with the lavender ceiling have not received similar attention. This qualitative research traces similarities between the lavender ceiling and the glass ceiling. More specifically, it presents a study designed to elucidate the experiences of gay men at work and compare them with those of women and minority group members, as reported in research literature on the glass ceiling. This research asked: 1) What have gay men experienced in the workplace? 2) What experiences have they had with recruitment, mentors, corporate climate, advancement opportunities, performance evaluation, social activities, harassment, and task force and committee assignments? 3) How do these experiences compare with those of women and minorities who have described their experiences with the glass ceiling? Purposeful and convenience sampling were used as participant selection strategies. Participants were diverse in terms of age, education, and industry. Data for this study were collected through semi-structured individual interviews with eight self-identified gay men working in human services, manufacturing, marketing, finance, government, the nonprofit sector, and retail. The gay men in the study described workplace experiences similar to descriptions of the glass ceiling faced by women and minorities. The lavender ceiling parallels the glass ceiling in corporate climates, harassment, mentors, social activities, promotions and performance appraisal, and task force and committee assignments at work. Women and most minorities do not, however, face the disclosure dilemma: Should one reveal his sexual orientation at work?

Keywords : discrimination, diversity, gay and lesbian, human resource

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