

# In Search of a Diversity Text: A Critical Review

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Diversity courses can take on different structures depending on the needs of the student body, preferences of the instructor, and goals of the university. One major challenge is selecting a text that is comprehensive enough to address the needs of students and practitioners to facilitate strategies for managerial effectiveness. Three diversity texts were selected for this review, each contributing a unique perspective based on both subjective and objective meanings of diversity:<sup>1</sup> Carr-Ruffino's (2007) seventh edition text, *Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace*; Harvey and Allard's (2008) fourth edition text, *Understanding and Managing Diversity*; and Thomas's (2005) *Diversity Dynamics in the Workplace*.

***Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace (7th ed.)***, by N. Carr-Ruffino, N. 2007. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2007. 550 pages.

Now in its seventh edition, this text has been frequently updated to include detailed accounts of many diverse cultures, subcultures, and lifestyles. Its author's major objective is to explain the influence of culture in the workplace and to introduce readers to the major customs, leadership issues, myths, real profiles, and stereotypes associated with diverse cultures. The text consists of three sections, the first section introducing the reader to workplace diversity issues of understanding discrimination, prejudices, and stereotypes, and

promoting multicultural awareness. The second section approaches workplace diversity from the perspective of understanding cultural, gender, and lifestyle differences in order to nourish an inclusive workplace. The third emphasizes the importance of creating a corporate culture that embraces an inclusive atmosphere in which all individuals are free to be authentic, builds and goes beyond affirmative action principles, modifies organizational strategy and practices, and overcomes resistance to change.

Chapter 1 serves as an overview to the book and positions diversity management as necessary to becoming globally competitive. In addition, this chapter is partially devoted to presenting key statistics that explain current and future workplace trends. It concludes with an introspective exercise that provides five important questions that examine cross-cultural differences. In chapter 2, a main goal is to begin building multicultural skills by understanding that individuals have different mental maps and personal realities. In turn, the Carr-Ruffino asserts that cultures differ in at least 11 different ways, such as communication style, decision orientations, and interpersonal relationships. Chapter 2 concludes with several exercises that help the reader to understand their cultural profile, sense of time, and values, and to explore their lack of familiarity with other cultures. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the dominant culture in the United States, Euro-Americans. Many common stereotypes are presented, followed by a brief historical overview and a current profile of this culture. The chapter concludes with a dialogue and corresponding exercises that examine the extent to which organizations adopt newcomers through assimilation, separation, deculturation, or multiculturalism approaches. Chapter 4 presents an extensive review of the origin of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, and proposes that the formation of prejudice is due in part to one's

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<sup>1</sup> A fourth text, Bell, M. P. (2007), *Diversity in Organizations*, Cengage, was excluded from this review to avoid potential conflicts of interest (Dr. Bell serves as one of the guest editors for this special issue). This text is a resource used in undergraduate and graduate courses, and interested readers can contact the authors for their review of the text.

culture, family, and personality. In chapter 5, the author discusses the importance of affirmative action and how it forms the basis for creating an inclusive corporate culture that values a multicultural workforce. To accompany this chapter, several exercises are included that stimulate organizational leaders to become agents of change for inclusive workplaces.

In the second section, multiple perspectives of various cultures, subcultures, and lifestyles are introduced to build a greater understanding of differences and to foster leadership skills that promote equitable workplaces. Each chapter in this section also presents organizational barriers and opportunities for building on the strengths of these groups. Since the content and direction of these chapters promotes awareness and understanding of other cultures, and due to space limitations, only the titles of the chapter will be here: chapter 6, Gender; chapter 7, African Americans; chapter 8, American Indians; chapter 9, Asian Americans; chapter 10, Arab Americans; chapter 11, Latino Americans; chapter 12, Gay Persons; chapter 13, Persons With Disabilities; chapter 14, Older Persons; and chapter 15, Persons of all Sizes. In addition to the content of each chapter, one of the most valuable aspects of this section is the inclusion of skill-building cases and exercises and self-awareness activities that enable readers to explore their stereotypes and prejudices toward each group.

Chapter 16 represents the final section in this book, and here Carr-Ruffino asserts that inclusive corporate cultures can only be created when organizational policies and strategies are changed. An important point is that all employees are unique individuals that bring valuable social capital to the organization. Once again, the author stresses that affirmative action programs represent only the foundation for creating inclusive workplaces. Thus, leadership must introduce a multicultural approach to all levels of the organization and build consensus for a highly successful organization.

In summary, this book represents a valuable toolkit that allows the manager to understand how to create a multicultural workplace from the beginning stages where employee resistance to change comes into play to the later stages where continuous improvement initiatives would be critical. The strengths of this text are first in the extensive research that has culminated in demographic diversity of groups, and second, in the wealth of experiential exercises that address self-awareness, conflict scenarios, self-management, and management decision-making contexts provided to role-play various diversity scenarios. Additionally, the

skill builders provide relevant and practical management skills important to promote multicultural awareness for new as well as seasoned employees. These exercises are applicable for use in undergraduate and graduate courses as well as workplace diversity training courses. One weakness or at least challenge of this text is the extent to which the instructor has adequate time to cover the voluminous 550 pages of material. At the same time, the extensive coverage of diversity topics would enable an instructor or training facilitator to develop a comprehensive training or classroom learning experience.

***Understanding and Managing Diversity: Readings, Cases, and Exercises (4th ed.)***, edited by C. P. Harvey, & M. J. Allard. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008. 361 pages.

The direction of Harvey and Allard's *Understanding and Managing Diversity* emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to organizational diversity issues. Specifically, this diversity text consists of four major sections that include exploring individual processes that impact perceptions of diversity; understanding the influence of socialization experiences on formation of social identity; implementing inclusive diversity policies for organizational change, and introducing additional resources for teaching and learning about diversity. Further, this text also includes contributions from both practitioners and researchers, whose knowledge of particular areas of diversity is robust.

Section I is a compilation of eight readings and exercises that build the initial framework for understanding workplace diversity. Several readings focus on the significance of diversity with accentuation placed on the evolution of diversity practices from affirmative action and equal employment opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s to global diversity initiatives in the 21st century. This section also includes a brief, informative history on major U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity laws. One of the important contributions of this section is the inclusion of readings and class exercises that elicit the evaluation of one's own prejudices and stereotypes. This section concludes with an article that examines the importance of individual differences in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and thought processes, and how these differences can lead to escalation of emotions, and potentially, to conflict.

Section II contains 30 readings and exercises that focus on explaining the extent to which the social institutions of society, such as one's culture, ethnicity, gender, and religion impact the behavior and perceptions of both majority and minority group members. This section includes several readings that introduce the reader to common misconceptions about African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics and provides an unbiased, detailed examination of issues facing these cultural groups. From there the authors present a well-balanced presentation on historical and current inequalities in the educational and pay system, based on individuals' ethnicity, gender, and social class. Additionally in Section II, the authors present topics such as motivating and retaining a multigenerational workforce and understanding fundamental values in different religions. One of the noteworthy additions to the most recent edition of this book includes a discussion devoted to explaining the battle for equal protectionism in Canada and the United States through laws, legislation, and organizational practices.

In Section III, Harvey and Allard explore diversity from the standpoint of creating inclusive work environments, beginning with the mission statement and organizational culture of the firm, and by realigning core competencies to create value. The main conclusions of this section are paramount to the future of inclusive workplaces in that all individuals must be involved in building and maintaining a diverse labor force. To address current diversity issues facing organizations, at least 10 real-life scenarios are presented. All have resulted in some form of litigation, and readers are asked to evaluate the scenarios in terms of deontological, teleological, and caring ethical theories. Readers are also given cases in organizations, including Pitney Bowes, Coca-Cola, the United States Air Force Academy, an educational institution, and Fairfax Metropolitan Hospital. Ultimately, these cases and exercises illustrate the barriers organizations face in creating inclusive workplaces and the extent to which leaders are emboldened to make conscious decisions about the extent to which their firm will adopt, embrace, and infuse inclusive diversity policies and practices into their organizational culture.

Section IV consists of additional teaching resources for diversity courses. To help instructors and students understand their knowledge of diversity concepts and perceptions before and after the course, the authors have included pre- and post-course assessment questionnaires. In addition, Joseph Champoux has included an extensive selection of films, both full length and selected scenes,

which complement key issues discussed throughout the text. In its fourth edition, this book has been revised to serve as an excellent stand-alone resource for undergraduate courses, and as a complementary resource for MBA courses and executive programs.

A key strength of this text is its interdisciplinary framework that ranges from emphasis on micro-level issues such as communication, conflict, negotiation, perceptions, and stereotypes to macro-level issues, such as sustaining competitive advantages by recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diversity workforce and by infusing the organization with a culture of inclusion. One weakness or limitation is the number of articles, cases, and exercises, which translate into a considerable task for the instructor choosing resources to use in a semester. The likely audiences for this text can include a wide array of academic courses from diversity and human resources management to cross-cultural and leadership courses. In addition, this text could serve practitioners in training courses to address both stereotype awareness as well as decision-making concerning diverse groups in the workforce.

***Diversity Dynamics in the Workplace***, by K. M. Thomas. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005. 233 pages.

*Diversity Dynamics* is unique in its approach, as its primary focus is on the strategic power of a diverse workforce through recruitment and selection, training and education, and organizational development practices. As compared to other diversity texts, *Diversity Dynamics* is written from the perspective of industrial and organizational psychology, and thus, includes theory-laden discussions on human behavior. From this industrial psychology perspective, research is synthesized from the human resources literature, and therefore, addresses topics relevant to selection, training, and managing interpersonal interactions. In contrast, the organizational psychology perspective addresses group behavior, conflict, leadership, and job stress.

The book consists of 12 chapters organized into 3 sections: staffing environments and process; minority socialization and the newcomer experience; and diversity intersections between organizations and environments. Each chapter concludes with a series of discussion questions and experiential learning opportunities that are designed to further engage students and reinforce critical learning points. Chapter 1 integrates ethnic minority and

gender composition including recent trends in the occupational composition of the labor force and introduces new diversity metaphors to describe an evolving diverse labor market. In chapter 2, the author emphasizes the importance of recruitment and organizational attraction practices and reviews Kanter's (1977) homosocial reproduction system and Schneider's (1983) attraction-selection-attrition model. Since both models focus on homogenous reproduction of organizational members and can lead to glass ceilings for underrepresented minorities, Thomas advises organizations to carefully construct their organizational images in order to strategically attract a diverse workforce. This chapter concludes with a brief overview on recruiter effects on applicant perceptions of the organization and the job. Chapter 3 reviews major U.S. legislation that impacts the staffing process and includes an insightful discussion on the Uniform Guidelines on Selection Procedures and several landmark cases that have shaped diversity management practices.

Chapters 4 through 8 address specific job-related issues for managing many aspects of diversity that are driven by the climate and culture of an organization. Chapter 4 focuses on the organizational socialization process for new employees and provides examples and models of diversity training. A main goal in chapter 5 is to promote the strategic importance of life-long career development for women, ethnic minorities, and gay men and lesbians. An interesting contribution from this chapter is the emphasis on proactive career planning in which the individual seeks out mentoring and networking opportunities. Further, another key point includes the importance of career management in which the organization facilitates the creation of affinity groups and mentoring circles. In chapter 6, a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of diverse groups is followed by the presentation of several theories that explain group dysfunction. Some theories include social identity, relational demography, legacy effects, stereotyping, and self-fulfilling prophecies. In order to overcome these issues in diverse groups, the author proposes utilization of diversity training to increase awareness of differences, modification in selection procedures to promote hiring and promotion of individuals with more flexible personalities, and encouragement of nonwork socialization activities to promote understanding and respect of different cultures. Chapter 7 provides a powerful presentation of the interplay among conflict, privilege, and diversity in the workplace. Specifically, Thomas identifies the triggers of diversity conflict,

with an emphasis on privilege, as first addressed by Peggy McIntosh, and recommends strategies for reducing intergroup conflict. Chapter 8 discusses stressors that can occur in a diverse workplace and consequences of job stress. The author sets forth propositions that diverse populations are prone to different sources of stress ranging from social isolation to affirmative action stigma. In response to these common and unique sources of stress, the chapter concludes with individual and organizational strategies for stress management.

Chapters 9 through 12 address micro- and macrolevel diversity issues that arise in organizations. An interesting discussion in chapter 9 involves the glass ceiling and examines leadership in the context of diversity and potential barriers to advancement into leadership roles. A central premise in this chapter is the proposition of using organizational developmental opportunities coupled with mentoring strategies. In conclusion, the author stresses that organizations must develop multicultural competencies and emancipatory leadership models to foster an inclusive workplace environment. Chapter 10 examines diversity orientations in the context of how diversity is viewed from an organizational perspective. Several models and paradigms, including Cox's (1991) acculturation model and Thomas and Ely's (1996) diversity paradigm, are discussed in terms of how they have been used to classify organizations and to implement strategies in proactive diversity management. Chapter 11 examines diversity orientations from the individual perspective, with a discussion on the similarities and differences between Blacks, other people of color, and White identity development models. The final chapter is a short summary that includes specific recommendations for individuals and organizations to successfully create and leverage an inclusive workplace with a diverse workforce.

In summary, this book provides a rich theoretical foundation for understanding the complexities of diversity and diversity management in the workplace. The author focuses more on understanding and managing human interactions at work from the perspective of theories in organizational behavior and human resources management than on the actual experiences of diversity in terms of myths, perceptions, and stereotypes commonly addressed in diversity texts. The wealth of theories discussed and integrated provides a student or HR professional with instructional direction for the blending of science and practice in examining the results of theory testing in the workplace. One weakness or shortcoming of this text is its lack of

experiential exercises that would allow students to practice diversity management strategies. This text would be attractive to senior human resource managers, as it addresses specific issues and recommendations for developing, implementing, and

sustaining inclusive diversity programs in the workplace. Another target audience would be graduate programs, to supplement courses in management, human resources management, and diversity.

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