Evidence-Based Organizational Practices for Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging and Equity

Evidence-Based Organizational Practices for Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging and Equity

Edited by

Ludmila N. Praslova

To every hard-working human who has been misunderstood, stereotyped, and excluded. We see you. And we work hard to help create workplaces where diversity, inclusion, belonging, and equity are woven into all practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section Three: Practical Solutions

Section Four: Leadership for Inclusion (Humble Champions)

Praise for the Book

This well-researched book, crafted by diversity and inclusion experts, offers a transformative roadmap for organizations and professionals. With invaluable insights on combating microaggressions, supporting employee mental health, and fostering inclusivity, it equips readers with actionable strategies to create thriving workplaces. Take your company into a future where every individual's unique contributions are celebrated, and watch your organization flourish.

> Luis Velasquez MBA, PhD. Executive Coach, Founder, Velas Coaching LLC, *Harvard Business Review* contributor.

We often throw our hands up in the air in frustration over systemic issues and organizational environments that fail humans. But how do we pinpoint and correct these issues? Read this book and you'll find the answers and the power to change your organizational environment and quite possibly, the world.

> Caroline Stokes, Executive Coach, author of *Elephants Before Unicorns*.

Work can be a source of joy if we are included and understood. This book brings together experts from a variety of fields to share their evidence-based advice on cultivating diverse and human-focused organizations. You'll find plenty of practical advice to make your organization one where everyone can feel seen, supported - and joyful in their work. Get your copy and start your deep and holistic dive into diversity and inclusion in organizations.

> Christina Guthier, Ph.D., Occupational Health Psychologist focused on joy in work, TEDx speaker, Writer

This must-read book is a thought-provoking deeply researched guide to building inclusive work cultures. The authors explore the complexities and opportunities that today's leaders face while providing practical insights and actions to create more equitable workplaces for all.

> Ellen Taaffe, MBA, Director of the Women's Leadership Program, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, former Fortune 50 executive, Board Director.

Diversity adds value. For those looking to enhance organizational value creation by ensuring everyone can contribute, "Evidence-Based Organizational Practices for Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging and Equity" is an exceptional read. This book delivers a compelling roadmap for building diversity and inclusivity into the very fabric of an organization. It's not just about theories and concepts—it's about actions and results.

> Dr. Oleg Konovalov, 'the da Vinci of visionary leadership,' global thought leader, Durham University Business School MBA mentor, author of *The Vision Code*.

An indispensable guide for the 21st-century workplace, this book offers a wealth of research-backed insights on diversity and inclusion. It's not just a book; it's a catalyst for cultural change.

> Dr. Aviva Legatt, Author of Get Real and Get In, St. Martin's Press.

The field of industrial-organizational psychology serves the crucial purpose of creating healthier organizations. But, what does that even mean? To create the healthiest organizations, it's imperative to take the research we conduct and turn it into practical actions that support diversity, inclusion, engagement, leadership quality, good leaders, employee happiness, and efficient processes. This book does that. Let's use this research and invest in a better organizational future. Your people, and your bottom line, will thank you later!

> Jeff Tsacoumangos, M.S., Senior Associate - Talent Management and Organizational Development, Willis Towers Watson.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION
AND BELONGING AT WORK:
THE FOCUS ON FAIRNESS

LUDMILA N. PRASLOVA

Abstract

This book offers an in-depth examination of diversity and inclusion within modern organizations. It includes contributions from authors with diverse personal, disciplinary, and methodological backgrounds who offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on diversity challenges and solutions. This introductory chapter offers an overview of the book's structure and topics. It also briefly addresses the current state of the field and discusses definitions of key terms, such as diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, justice, and accessibility.

Creating the future of work that serves humanity means bringing together different minds and supporting them in effectively working together. Effective collaboration, however, requires trust (Hofhuis et al., 2016; Lordan, n.d.), as well as ensuring justice in the workplace (Roberson, 2020). Mechanisms for ensuring justice must be embedded in organizational processes (Praslova, 2022). Justice-focused processes facilitate supporting and valuing the expression of diverse perspectives, ensuring equitable access to opportunities for growth and advancement, and fostering cultures of dignity and understanding.

Traditionally, most organizations have struggled with ensuring equitable and supportive work environments. Despite some improvements in advancing fairness in the workplace over the last several decades, many gaps still need to be addressed. For example, while employers report that

they are making meaningful changes, employees do not see meaningful progress (Brecheisen, 2023). Only 30% of employees strongly agree they are treated fairly at their company, and only 44% feel respected. The lack of fairness and the lack of belonging result in lower organizational commitment and engagement (Carr et al., 2019). This is not particularly surprising, given that 40 percent of companies view diversity work as largely a compliance exercise (Gurchiek, 2021). In addition, other equality gaps might be created as new forms of working, such as the gig economy, and the impact of machine learning on both hiring and working becomes more prominent.

Despite obstacles to meaningful inclusion, there is now a substantial and growing body of research that shows what works, what does not, and demonstrates the overarching value of diversity in the workplace. Prioritizing inclusion and fairness can help organizations create a more productive environment for all employees, leading to better outcomes for both the business and the workers (Hawley, this volume; Cox, this volume).

Fairness is a common focus of much of the diversity work in organizations. However, fairness in the context of human diversity in the workplace is often discussed using various terms that correspond to somewhat different emphases and approaches. Some of the most common labels for fairness-focused offices and programs are D&I, DE&I, DEI, DEIB, DEIJ, JEDI, ADI, and IDEA, where D typically stands for diversity, E for equity, I for inclusion, B for belonging, J for justice and A for accessibility.

Human diversity reflects variations on many in-born and acquired dimensions, such as sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual abilities, neurology, age, culture, language, socioeconomic class, and many others. In the workplace, the term *diversity* often emphasizes the representation of people from different categories on various levels of the organization, although it could refer to less quantifiable phenomena. However, many experts agree that without inclusion, diversity is not a sufficient indicator of whether justice is achieved (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012; Roberson, 2020).

Inclusion is a combination of individual-level behaviors and organizational systems, policies, and practices that help – or hinder – individual participation in organizational life. According to APA (2012), inclusion is focused on respect for human dignity and individuality, participation, acknowledgment of identity and culture, and equitable access to resources and opportunities. However, equity is often seen as a crucial enough element of fairness frameworks that it is considered separately from diversity and inclusion.

Equity is focused on treating everyone fairly (Lee, 2022). However, unlike equality, equity does not define fairness as treating everyone the same (Espinoza, 2007). Instead, equity considers differences in circumstances, such as health status or economic resources, in determining fairness. For example, providing disability accommodations that enable individuals to perform their jobs is not always equal treatment. Still, it is equitable in allowing individuals to achieve outcomes in an adaptive fashion (e.g., providing screen readers to blind employees or dyslexia-friendly learning resources to those who need such adjustments).

The desired outcome of inclusive and equitable treatment is a sense of *belonging*—a feeling that one is a member of the community (Allen et al., 2021; Gonzalez-Flores et al., 2023; Lee, 2022). Developing a sense of belonging requires the involvement of one's authentic identity. Employees are unlikely to feel a sense of belonging if inclusion is contingent on individuals' masking (e.g., hiding a disability or neurodivergent characteristics), cultural code-switching (e.g., changing one's way of speaking), or otherwise concealing key aspects of one's true self (Filstad et al., 2019; Praslova, 2020).

Justice can be defined as the existence of mechanisms ensuring fairness of outcomes, policies and practices, as well as interpersonal treatment (Colquitt et al., 2001; Praslova, 2022; Roberson, 2020). Roberson (2020) advanced the idea of justice as both a human right and a necessary precursor to successful diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Accessibility - the design of physical, psychological, procedural, and digital aspects of work for the use of people with varying abilities and health-related needs - might be the least understood aspect of fairness in the workplace. There are two common misconceptions regarding accessibility. The first is treating accessibility as a disability accommodation. However, while accommodations may serve specific populations or individuals, accessibility is available to and benefits all (Huntsman, 2021). The second misconception is that accessibility is synonymous with disability inclusion. However, while accessibility and, in some cases, accommodation are necessary for disability inclusion, they are not sufficient. Workplaces might be physically and digitally accessible, but coworkers may still choose to ignore, mistreat, and otherwise exclude disabled employees (Praslova, in press).

The terminology of fairness is still developing. For example, while inclusion is one of the most popular terms, some pointed out the problematic nature of normalizing the implicit power differential between those doing the "inclusion" and those "being included" (e.g., Gundemir et al., 2023). Others have suggested adding "mattering" or replacing "belonging" with

mattering - a sense of contributing to the collective (Prilleltensky, 2019; Prilleltensky et al., 2023).

While the search for the most fitting terminology is likely to continue, there is another, arguably even more pressing matter in ensuring fairness for people of all backgrounds in the workplace – many DEIB programs and interventions fail or only partially succeed (Brecheisen, 2023; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Hunt, this volume; Praslova, 2022). One of the reasons for these failures—and the resulting increase in cynicism—is the lack of empirical foundation for such interventions (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; 2020). This book seeks to help practitioners increase their success rate by providing evidence-based guidance to address several longstanding issues, such as sexual harassment, high attrition of new hires due to non-inclusive onboarding, persistent gender and race inequalities, and the exclusion of neurodivergent talent.

About this Book

This collection is a guide to the complex dynamics of diversity and inclusion in contemporary organizations. It combines research and analytical exploration with practical insight, offering the reader both a "big picture" view of this multifaced field and "deep dives" into specific topics, such as making organizational onboarding inclusive or preventing sexual harassment. Chapters represent diversity in academic backgrounds and research approaches, from quantitative empirical studies (Bagorio and Bouchard) to intimately qualitative explorations (Bali & Stachowiak) and in-depth literature reviews (Fox et al.). Authors come from many cultural, national, racial, religious, ability, neurodiversity, linguistic, and other backgrounds.

Each chapter can stand on its own, and readers are encouraged to design their own journey through the book. Those just starting their exploration of diversity in the workplace would benefit from following the book from start to end. Others may choose to specifically focus on the topic of interest. The book is arranged into four distinct parts: foundational questions, problems, solutions, and the role of leadership.

Section One: The Big Picture

Some questions in diversity and inclusion work are overarching and foundational, such as several fundamental WHYs. Why engage in this work? Why is it difficult to do? And why do simple fixes not work? Section One of this book is focused on the big picture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and wrestles with foundational questions. First, Hawley sets

the stage by exploring the profound impact of diversity on productivity and the overall quality of the workforce. In addition, Hawley offers three intriguing case studies featuring global organizations that have achieved remarkable success in promoting diversity and inclusion: Sodexo, Marriott International, and Kaiser Permanente. Next, Hunt provides a critical analysis of the last several decades of diversity interventions and proposes solutions for future success. Finally, Nwoye explores the deep historical and cultural roots of bias and highlights the importance of honesty and self-examination in alleviating its impact.

A Strategic Advantage. Embracing diversity is both a moral imperative and a strategic advantage for organizations. Hawley illustrates how promoting inclusivity and seeking diverse perspectives can help release the full potential of the organization's workforce, foster innovation, and improve problem-solving. Diverse teams bring together individuals with unique backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge, enabling them to approach challenges from various angles and spark creativity. This diverse thinking leads to innovation, driving organizational growth and competitive advantage. Collaboration among individuals from different backgrounds results in a fusion of skills, expertise, and insights that complement each other and lead to more robust decision-making. Furthermore, an inclusive workplace boosts employee engagement and satisfaction, increasing motivation and productivity. When employees feel valued and respected, they contribute to a positive work environment and go the extra mile to achieve organizational goals. In today's evolving workforce, organizations succeed by maximizing the power of diversity and inclusion.

Progress and Problems. However, realizing the potential of diversity in the workplace is not easy or automatic. In fact, as several decades of experience show, progress in creating diverse and inclusive workplaces can be frustratingly slow. Hunt analyses the historical context of diversity efforts and suggests strategies for future success. After years of implementing diversity programs in the workplace, we have learned two important things. First, creating diverse and inclusive workforces is crucial for driving business success. Second, creating diverse and inclusive workplaces takes more than a simple fix. Inequality and bias are multifaceted, and addressing them requires comprehensive solutions that span all aspects of employment and address bias at every step of the employment lifecycle. Hunt also asserts that promoting diversity and inclusion in organizations requires combining meritocracy and multiculturalism. Meritocracy involves fair, free from bias decision-making processes based on accurate measurement. On the other hand, multiculturalism promotes creating supportive and inclusive cultures that recognize, accept, and celebrate differences in backgrounds and

cultures.

Biased Beliefs. Adopting a multicultural perspective does not come easily, however. Nwoye emphasizes understanding the social origins of belief formation as crucial to combating discriminatory practices. Nwoye discusses the role of bias in behaviors associated with racism and other forms of discrimination and calls for honesty and self-reflection that can help challenge negative beliefs. The chapter explores the impact of belief formation and cultural values on various forms of discrimination, with a particular focus on race in the United States, as well as neurodiversity and transgender experiences. Nwoye concludes by emphasizing the need for engagement, understanding, and personal transformation to promote equality, respect, and understanding in society.

Section Two: Pernicious Problems

The lack of diversity, inclusion, and equity manifests in many ways. Some of the problems rooted in centuries-old power dynamics and deeply ingrained stereotypes continue to re-emerge in modernized forms, sometimes surrounded by misleadingly positive language (such as calling involuntary underemployment of people from vulnerable groups "flexibility"). Section Two of this book is dedicated to analyzing and addressing significant issues such as sexual harassment, microaggressions, underemployment, motherhood penalty, and mental health concerns in the workplace.

Sexual Harassment. Fox, Wolburg-Martinez, Kulason, and Bernard tackle the problem of sexual harassment. They challenge common practices that fail to produce the desired reduction in sexual harassment and advocate for developing new, evidence-based practices. They challenge the traditional "women as victims" focus to include the experiences of the often-ignored target groups, such as BIPOC communities, men, transgender, and non-binary individuals. Practitioners play a critical role in addressing sexual harassment by implementing evidence-based strategies to improve working conditions. Strategies that foster respectful climates are particularly relevant in sexual harassment interventions. In addition, creating safe reporting channels, protecting reporters and targets from retaliation, and promoting multiple confidential avenues for reporting are essential to encourage reporting and prevent harassment.

Researchers can help practitioners address harassment by producing more practical literature that examines perpetrators' motivations, outcomes, and other factors that may predict sexual harassment. When academics, practitioners, and human resource professionals collaborate, they can create useful guidelines and resources to make workplaces safer.

Microaggressions. While sexual harassment has been a focus of major court cases, another type of harmful behavior - microaggressions – typically receives less attention. Racial microaggressions are daily disparaging messages that racialized individuals receive due to their group membership, which can have major impacts on targeted individuals. Bouchard's empirical study explores the relationship between diversity attitudes, microaggressions towards multiracial individuals, and career satisfaction in the workplace. The review of the literature clearly demonstrates that microaggressions have adverse effects, including increased psychological distress. The reported study focused on participants' diversity attitudes, their observations of multiracial microaggressions in the workplace, and their career satisfaction levels. With a limited sample size and the pandemic-impacted data collection, the study did not find the key expected predictors of perceived multiracial microaggressions. However, the results indicate a significant positive correlation between diversity attitudes and career satisfaction, suggesting that individuals with more positive attitudes toward diversity tend to be more satisfied with their careers.

Underemployment and Precarious Employment. Unfortunately, not all jobs lead to satisfying careers. Kurtz addresses the problem of insufficient and precarious employment and their impact on women and other economically vulnerable employee categories. This chapter discusses the changing nature of work and the rise of alternative employment options, such as independent contracting and freelancing. These nonstandard work arrangements are often precarious and stressful due to unpredictable shifts or on-call work. Independent contractors and contingent workers are also often excluded from the protection of anti-discrimination laws. Women, constrained by bias and the unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities, have been more likely to accept these precarious jobs, which further limits their opportunities for promotions and skill development, job security, and equitable pay. The chapter suggests changes in policy that may help ameliorate the issue of precarious employment and its intersectional impact on the already socially vulnerable.

Mental Health. Life and work stressors interact with individuals' vulnerabilities and impact our mental health. Lee points out that while mental health concerns have a significant effect on both employees and organizations, they are often overlooked in diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions. However, considering mental health as part of diversity initiatives is crucial, both because of its impact on employee well-being and the fact that mental health concerns are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Workplace support for mental health heavily relies on the effectiveness of managers who play a crucial role in supporting their

employees' mental health. Evidence-based training can empower managers to effectively assist employees dealing with mental health concerns. Managers benefit from training in understanding stress and mental health conditions. Training can help develop managerial skills of discussing concerns with employees, creating a mental health inclusive culture, and conducting fair performance assessments. Equipping managers with these skills leads to improved employee well-being, performance, and engagement.

Motherhood Penalty. Some groups of people deal with unique sets of life's challenges and stressors. In her chapter on motherhood bias, Kurtz examines the negative impact of gendered expectations in the workplace and in the larger society on mothers' health, well-being, and career outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the unfairness in work-life balance experienced by mothers. The lockdown measures, lack of childcare, job losses, and blurred boundaries between work and home have created unprecedented challenges. Women already faced disproportionate responsibilities in unpaid housework and childcare, and the pandemic added to these burdens. The pressure on mothers has significantly impacted their physical and mental health. The chapter suggests addressing bias and outdated workplace policies to alleviate the strain and penalties faced by employed mothers.

The deep human impact of injustice and inequities in the world of work calls for solutions that are both effective and as immediate as possible. The next set of chapters offers solutions that can increase equity and fairness at work.

Section Three: Practical Solutions

Section Three of this book contains chapters primarily focused on practical solutions for organizations that seek to implement inclusive practices. Proposed solutions are as diverse as contributors to this book and their backgrounds. Phelan offers an in-depth look at how training and onboarding programs can support inclusion and equity. Cunningham outlines management strategies developed to support neurodiversity that can help all employees belong. Bali and Stachowiak introduce a novel approach to going beyond one-size-fits-all and creating inclusive cultures through intentional hospitality. Finally, Cox advocates for systemic change with a focus on the crucial role of leaders in making organizations inclusive, while Praslova stresses the role of inclusive talent practices.

Onboarding. A well-executed onboarding process is essential in establishing a positive relationship between new employees and their organization. Phelan highlights the critical role of inclusive onboarding in

ensuring employee and organizational success. Building a diverse workforce is not enough; organizations must also foster an inclusive culture that values different perspectives and contributions. Onboarding can be a critical stage for combating bias and unfairness in the workplace.

Learning science principles, such as the understanding of expertise, feedback, goal-setting, attention, and motivation, can inform the design of effective onboarding training. Learning engineering focuses on implementing and adapting learning solutions in real-world contexts, considering the individual backgrounds, identities, and skill levels of new employees. Achieving positive outcomes requires attention to both cognitive and affective aspects of learning.

Phelan acknowledges the complexity of setting new employees up for success and stresses the importance of valuing and involving employees in co-creating the learning environment. Implementing inclusive onboarding practices and establishing a culture of learning and growth may take time, but it is a foundation of a supportive and equitable workplace environment.

Neuroinclusive Management. Cunningham explores the benefits of managing teams with a neurodivergent lens to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment and integrates findings from the systematic review with practical experience to provide recommendations for creating a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment. Traditional management practices may not effectively accommodate neurodivergent employees, who often have different ways of processing information and approaching tasks. Cunningham emphasizes neuroinclusion strategies that benefit all employees, such as strength-based management, clear and explicit communication, making skills-based decisions, and fostering a culture of feedback.

The chapter also discusses the concept of neurodiversity as the last frontier of diversity, equity, and inclusion, highlighting the importance of recognizing and valuing the strengths of individuals with neurodivergent conditions. By adopting strategies that accommodate the unique strengths and needs of neurodivergent employees, organizations can create a culture of inclusion and reap the benefits of diverse perspectives and talents.

Intentionally Equitable Hospitality. Bali and Stachowiak remind us that one-size-fits-all solutions are neither inclusive nor effective. As a replacement for uniform ways of working and learning, they introduce the concept of Intentionally Equitable Hospitality (IEH). Initially developed in the field of education and later expanded to different work contexts, IEH emphasizes creating inclusive environments that enable individuals to bring their authentic selves and contribute their unique strengths. By embracing IEH, organizations prioritize inclusivity, fairness, and intentional support

for individual growth. This approach encourages organizations to value diversity, leverage the diverse abilities and strengths of their employees, and create an environment where all employees can thrive and make meaningful contributions.

Strategy and Leadership. In most organizations, meaningful change requires the involvement of leaders. Cox stresses the importance of a strategic approach to DEIB initiatives in organizations, starting from the C-suite level. Cox emphasizes that CEOs should take ownership of the DE&I strategy and make it a strategic priority. They should hire a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) who reports directly to the CEO and is part of the executive team. The chapter also suggests using data to define the diversity and inclusion challenges specific to each organization and infusing inclusion principles into business operations.

Best Talent Practices as Inclusive Practices. The chapter by Praslova is focused on the inclusion of neurodivergent populations in the workplace. While some believe that neuroinclusion needs are unique and not applicable to other diversity initiatives, this chapter advances the argument that removing systemic obstacles to workplace access and the success of neurodivergent populations can help improve belonging for all employees. This largely requires using evidence-based talent practices that benefit all employees.

Section Four: Leadership Matters

The role of leadership in creating inclusive work environments is one of the recurring themes across multiple chapters of this book. Chapters in Section Four of this collection highlight the role of leadership in advancing inclusion efforts and promoting equity and offer an exploration into the leader's own identity journey. Velasco and Bagorio discuss the characteristics of inclusive leaders—such as humility and encouragement of employee participation—and provide strategies for overcoming challenges and leading positive change. Finally, Hernández Blandón explores how inclusive leadership is impacted by leaders' own intersectional identities.

Humility in Leadership. Velasco explores the relationship between humility in leaders and psychological safety and belonging in teams. Humility, once frowned upon in the workplace, is now acknowledged as a valuable characteristic of successful leaders. Humble leaders positively impact team psychological safety, building the foundation for increased work engagement, trust, creativity, and a sense of belonging and inclusion. Humble leaders admit their mistakes, recognize the strengths of others, and prioritize personal growth and learning.

Leaders who display humility tend to adopt servant and authentic leadership styles. These styles prioritize supporting and empowering their team members. Humble leaders create an environment of trust and mutual respect, which fosters loyalty and promotes psychological safety within the team. Cultural humility further enhances teams' psychological safety and belonging. It encourages flexibility and respect for different values, behaviors, and experiences. Velasco outlines an agenda for future research that explores the relationship between humility and psychological safety further, considering cultural and societal differences. Investigating the influence of expressed humility and cultural humility on psychological safety in diverse teams might be particularly fruitful.

Participative Leadership. Bagorio emphasizes the growing significance of fostering communities, particularly due to the surge of remote work and the resulting loneliness and disconnection among remote workers. Participative leadership, which involves engaging employees in organizational decision-making processes (Coch & French, 1948; House & Mitchell, 1975), can be a powerful instrument of supporting commitment. Moreover, participation is an important factor in creating organizational systems that are fair to employees from marginalized backgrounds (Gundemir et al., 2023). Research has shown a positive correlation between participative leadership and organizational commitment, indicating that employees feel more connected and committed to their organization when they are involved in decision-making.

Bagorio discusses best practices for cultivating communities of commitment through participative leadership. Practical steps may include evaluating the communication, measuring shared impact, and acting on employee feedback to establish inclusive and impactful decision-making processes. This proactive approach ensures that employees feel valued and supported.

Leaders and Intersectional Identities. Finally, the chapter by Hernández Blandón explores the intersectionality of identity and leadership, focusing on leading while being of Brown, specifically, of Nicaraguan descent. Hernández Blandón argues that leadership is embodied through the intersectionality of our identity and proposes a framework integrating the understanding of cultural humility and intersectionality. He further illustrates the concepts of intersectionality, cultural humility, and identity formation by examining his own leadership journey and contextualizing it within the leadership literature. This chapter concludes with practical suggestions for embodying leadership and encourages leaders to reflect on their own identities, practice cultural humility, and redefine leadership in a way that acknowledges and embraces the intersectionality of their identity.

Conclusion

This book offers practical, actionable strategies to enhance inclusivity and equity in the workplace. It also suggests avenues for further research. The mission to create an inclusive workplace requires collective responsibility. Hence, researchers need to provide a solid empirical foundation for effective workplace solutions. At the same time, organizational leaders, human resources managers, and every stakeholder bear a responsibility of intentional and informed action toward ensuring justice and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is a work of continuous improvement and many iterations. The nuances of each chapter may resonate differently with readers at various stages of this journey. The key principles and the focus on fairness, however, should remain universally applicable.

References

Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Rozek, C. S., McInereney, D., & Slavich, G. M. (2021). Belonging: A review of conceptual issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, *73*(1), 87–102.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2021.1883409

American Psychological Association. (2012). Guidelines for assessment of and intervention with persons with disabilities. *American Psychologist*, *67*(1), 43–62. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025892

Brecheisen, J. (2023, March 09). Research: Where employees think companies' DEIB efforts are failing. *Harvard Business Review.*
https://hbr.org/2023/03/research-where-employees-think-companies-deib-efforts-are-failing

Carr E. W., Reece, A., Rosen Kellerman, G., & Robichaux, A. (2019, December 16). The value of belonging at work. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work

Coch, L., & French, J. R. P., Jr. (1948). Overcoming resistance to change. *Human Relations*, *1*(1), 512–532.
https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674800100408

Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *The Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(3), 425–445. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425

Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2016). Why diversity programs fail. *Harvard Business Review*, *97*(4), 53–59. https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail?referral=00060

Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2020, May). Why sexual harassment programs backfire and what to do about it. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2020/05/why-sexual-harassment-programs-backfire

Espinoza, O. (2007). Solving the equity–equality conceptual dilemma: A new model for analysis of the educational process. *Educational Research*, *49*(4), 343–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131880701717198

Filstad, C., Traavik, L., & Gorli, M. (2019). Belonging at work: The experiences, representations and meanings of belonging. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 31*(2), 116–142. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-06-2018-0081

Gonzalez-Flores, A., Clay, W., Madzia, J., Harry-Hernandez, S., & Henderson, D. (2023). Our souls look back and wonder: Reflections on belonging and being invisible in medicine. *Annals of Family Medicine*, *21*(Suppl 2), S106–S108. https://doi-org/10.1370/afm.2916

Gundemir, S., Homan, C. A., & Greer, L. (2023, March 21). Overcoming the inclusion facade. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. https://sloan review.mit.edu/article/overcoming-the-inclusion-facade/

Gurchiek, K. (2021). *Report: Most companies are 'Going through the motions' of DE&I.* SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/report-most-companies-are-going-through-the-motions-of-dei.aspx

Hofhuis, J., van der Rijt, P. G., & Vlug, M. (2016). Diversity climate enhances work outcomes through trust and openness in workgroup communication. *SpringerPlus*, *5*(1), Article 714(2016). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-016-2499-4

House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. (1975). *Path-goal theory of leadership*. Washington University Seattle Department of Psychology.

Huntsman, S. (2021). Addressing workplace accessibility practices through technical communication research methods: One size does not fit all. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *64*(3), 221–234. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2021.3094036

Lee, S. (2022, June 13). Why belonging is key to building the new workforce. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/why-belonging-is-key-to-building-the-new-workforce/

Lordan, G. (n.d). *Why building trust improves diversity, inclusion, and productivity*. Raconteur. https://www.raconteur.net/growth-strategies/building-trust-drives-diversity-inclusion-and-productivity/

Praslova, L. (2020, November 30). Dancing with diversity: From inclusion illusion to authentic belonging. *SHRM Blog.* https://blog.shrm.org/blog/dancing-with-diversity-from-inclusion-illusion-to-authentic-belonging

Praslova, L. (2022, June 21). An intersectional approach to inclusion at work. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2022/06/an-intersectional-approach-to-inclusion-at-work

Praslova, L. (in press). *The canary code: A guide to neurodiversity and intersectional belonging in the workplace*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Prilleltensky, I. (2019). Mattering at the intersection of psychology, philosophy, and politics. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *65*(1). 16–34. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12368

Prilleltensky, I., Scarpa, M. P., Ness, O., & Di Martino, S. (2023). Mattering, wellness, and fairness: Psychosocial goods for the common good. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 93*(3), 198–210. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000668

Roberson, Q. (2020). Access to justice as a human right, organizational entitlement and precursor to diversity and inclusion. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, *39*(7), 787–791. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-07-2020-0182

SECTION ONE:

THE BIG PICTURE

Chapter Two

The Journey Toward Inclusivity in the Workplace: How Does a Diverse Workforce Impact the Organizational Bottom Line?

Tamela H. Hawley

Abstract

This chapter emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and diverse viewpoints for maximizing an organization's potential, using case studies to highlight key concepts. Diverse teams enhance problem-solving and creativity. Collaborating across backgrounds combines skills and insights for optimal decision-making. An inclusive environment boosts engagement, productivity, and satisfaction. Leveraging diversity and inclusion is essential for modern organizations.

Introduction

In today's global environment, workplace diversity is no longer a buzzword but a key driver of success for organizations of all sizes and sectors. By embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive culture, businesses are tapping into the valuable skills, perspectives, and experiences of a diverse workforce to drive innovation, creativity, and productivity. Research has long shown that diverse workplaces are more innovative, productive, profitable, and create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. Increasing diversity leads to better decision-making, higher employee engagement, and improved overall business performance. In the current post-pandemic workforce that reflects a global awareness of anti-racism, how can organizations achieve their goals of creating a more inclusive environment without compromising in other areas? In this chapter, we will explore the benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace,

look at some exemplars as case studies, and provide practical strategies for creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce that can boost organizational productivity and competitiveness.

To ensure we are on the same page, let's establish some definitions first. According to *Webster's Dictionary* (2023), diversity refers to "the condition of having or being composed of differing elements…especially the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organization." I will refer to diversity in the workplace as the recognition and appreciation of differences among employees based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or any other factors. Inclusion will be defined as the recognition, valuing, and incorporation of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that employees bring to the workplace. The Academy to Innovate HR refers to equity as "offering all (candidates and) employees the same opportunities while taking into account their individual needs for specific support or resources and their intersectionalities" (Verlinden, 2022, "What does equity mean in a workplace?" section). Gallup (2022) defines equity as "fair treatment, access and advancement for each person" (p. 3). Equity will be defined here as access to opportunities for fulfillment and advancement for employees across the continuum of an organization.

Creating a diverse workplace requires intentional efforts to attract, retain, and promote employees from diverse backgrounds. This includes implementing policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as offering diversity training and ensuring equal pay and promotion opportunities. It also involves creating a culture that values and celebrates diversity, including fostering open communication and mutual respect among employees from different backgrounds. However, creating a diverse workplace is the beginning of the path to true organizational transformation. Diversity can be a driver for quality in an organization, but as we shall discover, it is necessary for organizations to go further for the benefits of diversity to be long-lasting.

Diversity as a Driver for Quality

Almost 30 years ago, Thomas and Ely (1996) pointed out the pitfalls of treating workplace diversity as merely a numbers game. Framing what they called the *Discrimination and Fairness Paradigm*, they describe companies that were successful at increasing diversity within the workplace through targeted programs. However, this paradigm has not gone far enough to help engage the workforce in such a way as to impact the quality of businesses. Alternatively, companies that used a paradigm that made use of their diverse

employees' unique cultural experiences and perspectives tended to see higher productivity and profitability. Research has shown workplace diversity is a driver of productivity and quality. Central among these benefits are increases in innovation and customer relations.

Innovation

A diverse workplace draws on a variety of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds, which can lead to new and innovative approaches to problem-solving. Ely and Thomas (2020) found that companies with diverse management teams are more innovative and generate more revenue from new products and services than companies with homogeneous management teams. Hunt et al. (2015) looked at 366 companies across the United States, Canada, Latina America, and the United Kingdom. They found that companies in the top quartile of racial and gender diversity were 30% more likely to have higher financial returns than the national medians. Hewlett et al. (2013) found that companies with diverse teams are 45% more likely to improve market share and 70% more likely to capture a new market.

Innovation has been linked to creativity which has been found to correlate to diversity within a team. Marone (2021) reports that heterogeneity within groups tends to spark deeper levels of creative thinking, whereas homogeneous groups are more likely to result in "convergent thinking." Other research suggests that ethnic and gender diversity in the workplace can lead to better decision-making. Diverse teams are better at identifying and addressing potential biases, which leads to more informed and objective decision-making. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research (Londoño-Vélez, 2022) found that diverse groups are more likely to identify and overcome cognitive biases related to economic disparities, leading to more accurate understanding and decision-making. The Center for Talent Innovation (Hewlett et al., 2013) refers to "acquired diversity" as the ability of an organization to make use of the added value of a diverse workforce to create and implement innovative ideas due to their ability to gain buy-in from employees as well as customers. Speaking of customers, another benefit of a diverse workforce is the impact that it has on customer relations.

Customer Relations

Another benefit of diversity in the workplace is improved customer relations. Customers are more likely to feel valued and understood by organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion. A study by Deloitte found that two-thirds of those employees who felt included at their place of