

Managing diversity in the workplace

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many people believe that discrimination is a thing of the past. They acknowledge that discrimination in the workplace was a serious problem in earlier times. In the present times, there is already heightened awareness of the problem, as well as the significant legal and financial consequences, have eliminated most forms of discrimination.

Aside from globalization, "multiculturalism" has become one of the buzzwords of the Information Age. Multiculturalism connotes diversity in culture and society. In realization of the diversity in American culture, multiculturalism has its roots in the things that separate people from each other. Varieties of multiculturalism go in different directions; but whether radical or liberal, whether emphasizing power or weakness and the distinct contributions of each ethnic group, multiculturalism keeps coming back to its roots in the word "difference".

The ideal of diversity, the mixing of things up, spreading the wealth, creating a new concept of "us", never quite ensued rapidly. In relating to racial, ethnic and sexual identity, multiculturalism carved out discrete areas of high visibility but kept those areas self-contained. Since the middle of the 1990's, dissatisfaction with this situation has been widespread, especially as the very concept of race has been forcefully called into question. Black may have been beautiful in the 1960's, and powerful in the 1970's, but it has also become increasingly viewed by cultural historians as a social construct, one fixed in place only by racism itself (Cotter, 2001).

As most of the people leading America's major institutions have grown up in segregated communities with segregated schools, they have had limited opportunities to interact with people from different cultures-people whose

<https://assignbuster.com/managing-diversity-in-the-workplace-research-paper-samples/>

first language may not be English, or whose skin color is not the same as their own. Many of these leaders have internalized all the stereotypes about race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity that are built into the structures of our society and our organizations.

They are ill prepared for the heterogeneity which exists in most organizations today and will surely exist in all organizations tomorrow. The dramatic changes that are upon us are creating an imperative to consider real integration of all workers--not as a matter of social justice or civil rights, but as a necessity for survival (Cross, 2000, p. 2).

Despite the fact that there are laws that inhibit, discrimination still exists in many corporations. Class-action discrimination lawsuits are still being settled every day to the tune of millions of dollars. For example, Texaco settled a \$176.1 million racial discrimination lawsuit involving 1,400 employees;

Ford Motor Company agreed to pay \$3 million to settle allegations that women and minority applicants were discriminated against in the hiring process at several Ford plants; and Coca-Cola settled a racial discrimination lawsuit for \$192.5 million. Currently, unsettled suits alleging workplace discrimination are pending at organizations ranging from Johnson & Johnson and BellSouth to the National Football League (George and Jones 2005, 341).

In someone's place of employment, for example, what does it mean when individual differences are distributed unequally across organizational levels or among work functions? What are the implications of some members holding majority status while others are minorities in respect to representation with the organization?

The daily work challenges faced by minority cultures or populations in organizations can range from having to deal with misunderstandings and lack of sensitivity on the one hand to suffering harassment and discrimination, active or subtle, on the other. In respect to race relations in the workplace, a Fortune magazine article once concluded: “ The good news is, there's plenty of progress for companies and employees to talk about.... But what often doesn't get said, especially in mixed-race settings, is how much remains to get done” (Mehta 2000, p. 182).

A recent study revealed that when résumés are sent to potential employers, those with white-sounding first names, such as Brett, received 50 percent more responses than those with black-sounding first names, such as Kareem. The fact is that such bias can still be limiting factors in too many work settings (Columbus Dispatch, 2003). Prejudice, or the holding of negative, irrational opinions and attitudes regarding members of diverse populations, sets the stage for diversity bias in the workplace.

Such bias can result in discrimination that actively disadvantages individuals by treating them unfairly and denying them the full benefits of organizational membership. This means that even though organizations are changing today, people are still aware that most senior executives in large organizations are older, white, and male. There is still likely to be more workforce diversity at lower and middle levels of most organizations than at the top.

In seeing diversity, one common theme in some approaches is that “ diversity is about all kinds of difference.” However, this view takes us down a dead-end road. Surely, the goal of management in general is just that: “
<https://assignbuster.com/managing-diversity-in-the-workplace-research-paper-samples/>

managing all kinds of difference." It is clear that what is needed from a field that is called "managing diversity" are theories and practices that help organizations reduce discrimination and enable employees who are increasingly diverse by race, gender, sexual orientation and ability to work together effectively.

Managers not only need to be competent in basic management skills, they need to learn how to apply those skills competently and comfortably when the employees in their charge are not like them. They need to know how to apply the organization's policies and practices equitably to all employees.

When managers become aware of evidence of potential discrimination, they need to pay immediate attention and act proactively to address the potential problem and perhaps change the organization's policies and practices. The management and leadership implications should be summed up in the concept of managing diversity. R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr. (1992) defines this as the process of comprehensively developing a work environment that is for everyone, that allows "all kinds of people to reach their full potential."

To help guide others in managing diversity, he poses these questions: (1) "What do I as a manager need to do to ensure the effective and efficient utilization of employees in pursuit of the corporate mission?" (2) "What are the implications of diversity for the way I manage?" When all managers can answer these questions positively Thomas calls the organization "diversity mature."

In such organizations, there is a diversity mission as well as an organizational mission; diversity is viewed as a strategic imperative and the

members understand diversity concepts. Ultimately, Thomas & Woodruff (1999) considered the basic building block of a diversity-mature organization is to become the “ diversity-mature individual”. According to Thomas & Woodruff, a “ diversity-mature individual” is someone who can positively and honestly answer the nine questions posed in The Effective Manager 2. 1:

Are You Mature on Diversity?

1. Do you accept personal responsibility for improving your performance?
2. Do you accept personal responsibility for improving your organization's performance?
3. Do you understand yourself and your organization?
4. Do you understand important diversity concepts?

Do you make decisions involving differences based on ability to meet job requirements?

Do you understand that diversity is complex and accompanied by tensions?

Are you able to cope with complexity and tensions in addressing diversity?

Are you willing to challenge the way things are?

Are you willing to learn continuously?

In a research reported by the Gallup Management Journal (December 2001), revealed that establishing a racially and ethnically inclusive workplace is good for morale. In a study of 2014 American workers, those who felt included were more likely to stay with their employers and recommend them to others. Survey questions asked such things as: “ Do you always trust your company to be fair to all employees?”

“ At work, are all employees always treated with respect?” “ Does your supervisor always make the best use of employees' skills?” they have gathered a conclusion that organizational culture of inclusivity counts both in terms of respect for people and in building organizational capacities for sustainable high performance.

Thus, managers and business leaders today find that managing diversity makes good business sense as a strategic imperative, not just a legal and moral one. A diverse workforce offers a rich pool of talents, ideas, and viewpoints useful for solving the complex problems of highly competitive and often-uncertain environments. No doubt that well-managed workforce diversity increases human capital. If we are to succeed in helping our organizations and our society become more equitable, more open, more inclusive and more profitable, we must not fall into power struggles between the management and its subordinates.

There is still no panacea that would eventually eliminate racial and gender biases, but in working together to the advantage of everyone will somehow dissolve the various barriers that impede productive output and understanding our fellowmen. This is because the success of an organization mainly lies on a common consensus that considers diversity to be an opportunity for everyone in an organization to learn from each other and harness each other's cooperation in order to improve the quality of the performance – as an individual, as a group and as a company.

References

<https://assignbuster.com/managing-diversity-in-the-workplace-research-paper-samples/>

Columbus Dispatch. (2003, January 17). Racism in Hiring Remains, Study Says. p. B2.

Cross, E. Y. (2000). Managing Diversity--The Courage to Lead. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Gallup Management Journal. (2001, December). The Most Inclusive Workplaces Generate the Most Loyal Employees. Gallup Group.

George, Jennifer M. & Jones, Gareth R. (2005). Understanding and Managing Organizational Behavior, (4th ed.), New York: Prentice-Hall - PearsonEducationCompany.

Mehta, Stephanie N. (2000, July 10). What Minority Employees Really Want, Fortune, pp. 181-186.

Thomas, R. Roosevelt Jr. (1992). Beyond Race and Gender (New York: AMACOM), p. 10

Thomas, R. Roosevelt Jr. & Woodruff, Marjorie I. (1999). Building a House for Diversity (New York: AMACOM).