

## Chapter 2

# A Paradigm Shift for Diversity Management: From Promoting Business Opportunity to Optimizing Lived Career Work Experiences

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter brings to light how diversity management, a widely practiced management philosophy, has emerged from an original focus of equal opportunity and representation to a focus on a strategic and competitive business opportunity for organizations. The objective of this chapter is to represent diversity management as an organization-serving philosophy that has failed to uphold a personal, moral, and ethical obligation to the dignity and worth of its socially marginalized workforce. The goal is to recommend a paradigm shift for diversity management that responds to the social injustices experienced by marginalized employees in everyday lived career experiences that can be detrimental to career aspirations.*

### INTRODUCTION

Diversity management, a widely practiced management philosophy, is a relatively ill-defined, ambiguous term (Foster & Harris, 2005) that is split between preserving an anti-discrimination goal and the more recent business opportunity goal for sustaining a competitive advantage. Problematic is that a business opportunity case for diversity fails to capture the everyday, lived career and work

experiences of socially marginalized members of the workforce. Socially marginalized refers to individuals who are subjected to unequal (and often unjust) treatment based on their social location without considering their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities (Small Business Administration, 2004). Lived career work experiences refers to incidents, episodes, events, and first-hand accounts that socially marginalized people endure and interpret as being demeaning, demoralizing,

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disrespectful, and prejudicial to their image in the workplace. Consequently, these experiences can be detrimental to one's self-esteem, self-worth, job satisfaction, and job performance which are all variables that can be career altering and impact career satisfaction. Lived career work experiences can occur in any context that an individual performs meaningful work. These types of behaviors and incidents are often perceived as being directly related to an individual's social location (race, sex, age, ability, religion, or other similarly social constructed categories). Therefore, a necessary function and goal for diversity management is recognizing demoralizing behaviors and taking the appropriate steps to expose, correct, and eliminate the source of the behavior.

In this chapter, two dichotomies of diversity management are highlighted: promoting diversity as a strategic business opportunity to gain a competitive advantage and operationalizing diversity management principles that respond to the lived career and work experiences of socially marginalized groups. In accordance with the discussion, the objectives of this chapter are to

1. Explain the evolution of the diversity management philosophy;
2. Identify varying definitions of diversity management;
3. Examine criticisms of diversity management;
4. Discuss diversity management as a business opportunity;
5. Recognize ethical, moral, and social obligations of diversity management;
6. Explain the need for a social justice perspective;
7. Link career development and diversity management, and
8. Explore future trends in diversity management.

Through examining the varying definitions, perspectives, and models of diversity management and considering the intent and focus of its origin, the goal of this chapter is to uncover how

the experiences of socially marginalized people have been neglected and left behind in pursuit of an organization-serving philosophy.

The career experience of socially marginalized people is a relatively unexplored area of diversity management, particularly in the sense of a coalition with diversity management as a business opportunity model. Moreover, the ethical, moral, and social obligations of diversity management has received scant attention. In bringing to light the lack of ethical, moral, and social obligations, another goal of this chapter is to implicate valuing employees by providing them social justice as a necessary outcome.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Evolution of a Diversity Management Philosophy**

In order to conceptualize diversity management, it is helpful to have clearer insight on the term diversity. The term diversity was coined by the late Merlin G. Pope, Jr., a diversity consultant, in reference to the changing demographics of the workforce (Profiles in Diversity Journal, 2007). Central to Pope's perspective was the need to include white males in bringing awareness (and subsequently being receptive) to the changing workforce.

Critics of the concept of diversity suggest how the notion has entered institutions like higher education through the management philosophy in a way that valuing or managing diversity seems to regard diversity as if it were a personification of a human resource (Ahmed, 2007). From another perspective, policymakers or others delegated to write statements or documents on diversity initiatives and the like may find difficulty in effectively doing so without exposing or bringing to light organizational undiscussables. "Organizational 'undiscussables' such as sexism, racism, patriarchy, and violence receive little attention

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