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He successfully completed the Diversity Management Strategy Certificate Course offered by the University of Houston's - International Institute for Diversity & Cross Cultural Management; located in the C.T. Bauer College of Business; and completed the first professional development program entitled Diversity Analytics offered by the Center for Diversity at the University Center in the Woodlands, Texas.

His most recent work includes the *Diversity Research Science Series*; these investigations include both quantitative and qualitative analysis of workforce diversity. In these documents, Dr. Robinson shares his findings which examine the meanings and essences of the workforce diversity experience. He gives both descriptive and verbatim examples of how employees experience what they experience in a diverse workforce. Further, he offers a theoretical foundation for workforce diversity.

This document is a tribute to the American worker. It is the first document of the 21st century that demonstrates how we experience what we experience working in a diverse workforce. There are verbatim descriptions of what it is like to work in some of the most respected companies practicing diversity. Organizations will finally have a document that presents a starting place to managing a diverse workforce. Researchers have an alternative entry point to understanding this topic. Most importantly, the social dilemmas that accompany workforce diversity have been illuminated.

There is an ongoing struggle to manage, sustain, and understand workforce diversity in some organizations. This investigation interprets some of the historical, social, and theoretical perspectives associated with workforce diversity using a conceptual framework derived from social dilemma theory. That application enabled the researcher to test the feasibility of Schneider and Northcraft's (1999) conceptual archetype and employ a sequential explanatory strategy and interpret some of the objective and subjective findings associated with workforce diversity. The results of this mixed-methods inquiry expand some of the knowledge and meanings associated with workforce diversity. These discoveries provide both practitioners and researchers an alternative path in assessing the complexities and challenges this topic holds for modern organizations.

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Diversity Science Research Series • Volume I - An attributional case analysis • Dr. C. Lamar Robinson

Diversity Science Research Series

by

Dr. C. Lamar Robinson



Volume I

An attributional case analysis:
The three social dilemmas of workforce diversity



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Prologue

This document is the first in a series of documents to be dedicated to workforce diversity research: *Diversity Science Research Series*. While the world continues to debate what diversity is and what diversity is not, one important feature has emerged in diversity thought: this movement can neither thrive nor die based upon empty rhetoric from its constituents. For example, the debate around Affirmative Action resonates in every hallway; and yet, the benefits of prestige, preference, and class remain intact and largely unchallenged. This quandary clouds the already difficult and complex issue of managing diversity. The criticalness of this issue has permeated both the academic communities as well as the business community. However, the acceptance of diversity has lagged far behind in this new culture aptly described as “The Knowledge Society”.

Despite the importance of managing diversity throughout the workforce, organizations have found themselves entrapped between policy and practice regarding this issue. Policies, such as Affirmative Action, that were largely designed to remedy first-order conflict such as discrimination and civil rights violations are still at large as we begin the 21st century. This position seems illogical given the advances of the workforce. Those advances, in conjunction with the outdated practices and policies, create a flawed worldview of diversity.

This worldview of diversity is exacerbated by a lack of direction. The responsibility of diversity research and discovery has not been defined by the academic community; hence, the business community is able to practice diversity with a wide range of ambiguity. Further, the component of diversity touches every aspect of business, yet, it has not been “given” the credibility as a field for research and continuous discovery. This is important because our dreams; visions; and intended benefits related to the diversity experience today are quite different as compared to previous generations. While discrimination, harassment, civil rights violations, and prejudice still

exist in the workplace today, the volume and tenacity of these acts, arguably, have decreased.

Case in point, the 2008 U.S. presidential election will boast it's most diverse, yet serious, draft candidates. Many of these political representatives have emerged from the business community in some capacity. These candidates will embody the principles of diversity in their appearances. However, questions will remain as to how these candidates will manage diversity in their own domains; even further, how will a sitting president manage the future diversity in America.

It is evident at each level (academic; business; government; and individual) that there is a struggle to manage diversity. This document takes a positive step in both theory and practice regarding the management of the workforce diversity experience. This document evolved from nearly ten years of experience in a Fortune 50 company and over 6 years of doctoral research. My primary targets are educators and researchers of diversity; managers throughout the workforce; organizational developers; and executive leadership. However, anyone who has occupied the workforce will find solace in this document.

Throughout this work I have drawn on my own reflexivity and experience as well as that of numerous others within the diversity spectrum to influence my approach. Further, a portion of this document relies on the interpretation of the National Urban League's (2005) diversity study; that nationally published study employed some of America's top companies as participants. It is my hope that this document will be used to close the perception gaps that exist regarding the topic of workforce diversity.

Initially, this document was meant to satisfy my own curiosities. For example, the subject of equal opportunity has always been a misnomer to me; thus, I have struggled to understand how some of the benefactors of Affirmative Action seek to eliminate this remedy to discrimination (albeit outdated) rather than improve the policy. From my perspective, the only equal opportunity that we share is the ability to act on a favorable chance. The reality is that we each have an "unequal experience" of that equal opportunity. Case in point, the evaluation of the career paths of various majority and minority subgroups produces varied outcomes.

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From my perspective, those outcomes are more the result of unequal experiences rather than malicious intent; however, the systematic explanations and acceptance of these outcomes remain mysterious. Therefore, my curiosity has always been exalted in regards to the manner in which organizations manage these experiences.

Further, this document began as a journey of self-discovery that morphed into something much bigger. As the journey developed so did the interest from others in the field and the workforce. Therefore, I have chosen to publish this work as a book in its entirety.

Throughout this journey there were peaks and valleys. Many of the valleys were the direct result of those who do not understand this work or its importance. Some ridiculed my efforts and attempted to humiliate both me and my work. Those efforts demonstrated some of the reasons why perception gaps exist in regards to workforce diversity. However, I found great strength in their efforts as I progressed with my research. Those individuals and entities created first hand knowledge and credibility for this researcher that proved to be vital during the explanatory phases of this document.

A greater number of others, such as Craig B. Clayton Sr. and numerous businesses, served as catalyst in promoting my belief structure related to this topic. That structure enabled me to vigorously pursue this path and interpret a wide range of data based on my reflexivity as an American worker. The result is a product that offers something exceptional to every member of the workforce. A brief overview of the contents follows.

Chapter One, "Structural descriptions of workforce diversity," opens the document with parts of the composite structural descriptions of minority occupancy in today's workforce. These descriptions can be found anywhere in the workforce by both majority and minority participants; they give insight to managers and organizations as to how employees experience what they experience in a diverse workforce. As you read them, please keep in mind that these are the personal experiences of eight elite interviewees. The purpose is not to judge their experience but to determine if your own meanings and essences of a diverse workforce can be found in their description. How prevalent are these meanings and essences in your own organization?

Chapter Two, "Introduction," opens the document with a natural attitude towards diversity and introduces this topic as a modern day phenomena

Chapter Three, "Literature review," demonstrates the breadth of researching diversity by analyzing some of the components and the dyadic nature of this topic. The literature review interprets a wide range of diversity-related studies.

Chapter Four, "Methodology," introduces an alternative methodology to diversity.

Chapter Five, "Findings," reveals the critical findings of the workforce diversity experience with verbatim examples.

Chapter Six, "Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations," discusses what the methodology and results sections mean to workforce diversity and its participants.

Chapter Seven, "Reflection" is the final chapter that allows me to discuss my feelings about this document. While my own experiences influenced this document they are not part of the investigation itself.

Chapter One.

Structural Descriptions Of Workforce Diversity

The purpose of this section is to illustrate some of the meanings and essences associated with the workforce diversity experience. The following descriptions are summaries provided by interviewees. This information serves as a litmus test for all those associated with workforce diversity. Are you a part of any of these experiences? As you read the descriptions, keep in mind that these thoughts; feelings; and meanings probably exist in your workplace. The prevalence is unknown in most cases.

This researcher found the process of recording these descriptions to be painful and stressful; imagine how these feelings would affect productivity if I were a participant in your workforce. And yet, there was a comfort among the interviewees that others share these sentiments. These summaries are limited to protect the identities of the interviewees. However, knowing this information can put organizational leadership one step closer to the actual diversity experience.

Recently, some of the benefactors of workforce diversity have sought to eliminate Affirmative Action. This document is not about Affirmative Action; instead, this document focuses on the management of diversity. Nevertheless, Affirmative Action is an integral component of that management. This entire document focuses on descriptions rather than judgments. Therefore, as you read this document you must decide whether these descriptions are examples of equal opportunity in the workforce or the unequal experience of equal opportunity in the workforce. In either case, organizations must manage the results.

Chapter Seven.

Author Reflections

As a continued member of the workforce, I have been humbled throughout this discourse in diversity. From every conceivable angle of my perplexed perspective, diversity has been “accepted” as possessing value creation except in regards to the workforce. For example, biology, investments, and factors of production each leverage diversity. Clearly, the unknown that diversity presents to those variables is outweighed by the perceived stability of its presence. I stand both amused and confused as to why the workforce has been perceived as the exception to this rule.

As a researcher, the experiences I investigated left me both embattled and wounded. Scenarios and memories in the workforce that I had forgotten or repressed were suddenly present. Wounds that were unhealed but camouflaged seemed to burn feverishly. Clear thoughts routinely became headaches while dreams became nightly episodes of tragedy. I shared both the pain of the interviewees and the burden of the organizations. There were so many instances where this topic and document became a surreal experience that was not my own.

Reluctantly, I must admit that I cried several times over during this investigation. Sometimes it was personal and other times it was for the interviewees as they shared their personal, yet subjective, accounts. It was then that I realized that this document could serve a much greater cause than my personal interest. This self-imposed burden became a great responsibility. Even so, the potential feelings of accomplishment, destiny, and self-fulfillment induced a will so great that I could only move forward.

As a reader, I now find an unfathomable comfort knowing that I have not experienced such mental anguish alone. For this, I am

greatly embarrassed. And yet, this is a true expression of sharing the essence and meaning of the workforce diversity experience without living the actual experience of the interviewees.

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