

Preface

Workplace diversity, namely the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in an employment or market setting, constitutes a reality in modern organizations. Thus, the aim of this study is to critically examine the current discourses concerning workplace diversity management practices and expand the perspective of current theoretical approaches and implementation interventions by underlying the potential contribution of different critical approaches to the process of shaping and informing more inclusive, as well as participative diversity practices.

The purpose of this book is to contribute to the elaboration of a nuanced framework for undertaking, supporting and implementing more egalitarian diversity policies. In so doing, we employ, analyze and systematically and thoroughly discuss critical perspectives that not only elevate respect for differences to an end, but also provide permeating insights into the nature and dynamics of differences, in view of an inclusive and truly participative organizational environment. In this respect, our purpose is twofold:

First and foremost, this study is intended to provide a detailed overview of critical diversity theories, by equally placing an emphasis on the potential commonalities underlying these highly diversified, if not inherently heterogeneous, streams of literature.

Second, we aim at exploring the potential links between critical diversity approaches and diversity management interventions in organizations: given the fact that all these approaches appear as inimical to, or at least critical of the business case, we seek to highlight and underscore alternative conceptions of diversity management. In this respect, we address the issue of translating central insights from critical diversity theories into diversity management practices, by elaborating a framework that encompasses criteria and principles of assessing diversity initiatives in terms of their likelihood to significantly enhance equality and inclusion in contemporary organizations.

To date, distinct and separate literatures have emerged in the field of critical approaches to diversity management, resulting in a somewhat fragmented view of the overall endeavour and in an ensuing ambiguity about the key determinants of such a critical approach. Despite the abundant literature on critical diversity approaches, there is a relative paucity of research, in terms of both monographs and journal

articles, on perspectives that explore, summarize and synthesize the core elements of these critical approaches. Accordingly, the differences observed across these distinct streams of research suggest that such an attempt to review the disparate literature is likely to yield helpful insights as to the very nature of the main constituents of an overall endeavour. The study is thus intended to fill this gap: taken for granted that the high conceptual, methodological and epistemological heterogeneity of such distinct theoretical streams renders any attempt to adopt an integrative perspective almost unfeasible, we are going to explore insights originating in such bodies of research that are in a position to inform diversity management practices. We thus seek to reassess and redefine diversity policies, strategies and initiatives through the lens of alternative, non-mainstream, or even heterodox paradigms.

The book is divided into five chapters: The first and second chapters are devoted to a brief overview of the connotations associated with workplace diversity and its effective management. The third chapter focuses on the organizational appropriation of differences through the formation and mediation of various diversity discourses: in the fourth chapter, we seek to demonstrate the particular articulations of these discourses with inequality and oppressive structures that perpetuate structural disadvantage, due to existing power disparity between dominant and unprivileged group members. Finally, in the last chapter we turn to operationalize these findings by underscoring the need of constructing relational and context-sensitive diversity management frameworks: the latter are expected to capture diversity-related issues in a way that moves beyond instrumental views of differences as a resource, or asset on which organizations can capitalize to enhance desired outcomes.

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