

Managing a Diverse
Workforce: Learning
Activities (Third
Edition)

Gary N Powell

3^{EDITION}

MANAGING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

*To the memory of my mother
Zina Powell
a wonderful parent and friend*

3
EDITION

MANAGING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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University of Connecticut



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

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Preface

The purpose of this book is the same as the purpose of the graduate and undergraduate courses I teach on managing a diverse workforce. The goal is for you to be able to answer the following question as many times as possible:

What can I do—in the workplace and in society—to promote the creation of inclusive work environments in which full advantage is taken of the potential contributions of all members, regardless of their job-irrelevant personal characteristics and group memberships?

To achieve this goal, the book provides a comprehensive set of learning activities that address issues related to workplace diversity. Participation in these activities will lead to a greater appreciation of the wide range of issues that arise when people classify themselves or are classified by others as members of different groups on whatever basis. Learning how to deal with these issues in a manner that preserves the integrity of all members of the workforce is fostered.

The *third edition* of the book contains the most popular and frequently used activities from the second edition; these activities have been updated to incorporate my classroom experiences with them and those of other instructors. In addition, the book offers several activities that appear for the first time in this edition. Each of these new activities has been pilot-tested in my courses on managing a diverse workforce. I will be interested to hear about *your* experiences with these exercises and any revisions you would like to recommend for future editions.

Here is a run-down of what the learning activities have to offer:

1. They explore the impact of diversity on the basis of numerous personal characteristics, including sex, race, ethnicity, age, physical and mental abilities, national culture, religion, socioeconomic

status, education, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, family background, and appearance.

2. They cover a wide range of diversity topics. Table 1 provides a list of the general topic(s) addressed by each activity. In addition, many of the activities may be adapted by the instructor to address particular topics not included in this list.
3. They are set in many different types of work settings, including both business and not-for-profit organizations.

This book provides background information, procedure, and discussion questions for each learning activity. A separate instructor's manual provides guidance for instructors on how to conduct the various activities, including masters for handouts.

For their contributions to the preparation of this book, I express my deep gratitude to Tiger the Cat for her loving, affectionate, playful, and distracting presence in my life; and Laura Graves, my wife and favorite colleague, for standing by me and encouraging me all the way.

Table 1 Topics Addressed by Learning Activities

A.	Introduction/Dimensions of Diversity 1. Your Pie Chart 2. People Like Us
B.	Working With People in the Majority Group 3. Becoming a Minority
C.	Working With People From a Different National Culture 4. Would You Repeat That?
D.	Being Socialized 5. Gender-Based Perceptions 6. Once Upon a Time
E.	Making Employment Decisions 7. Consulting Analyst Wanted 8. Who Gets Hired? 9. The Prison "Break"
F.	Working in Diverse Teams 9. The Prison "Break"

G.	Promoting Positive Race Relations 10. Beyond O. J.
H.	Leading People 11. Designer Decorations
I.	Dealing With Sexuality in the Workplace 12. Dealing With Sexually Oriented Behavior 13. Mixing Sex and Work
J.	Managing the Work-Family Interface 14. Have I Got Good News for Us! 15. Managing From a Distance
K.	Pursuing a Career 15. Managing From a Distance 16. Networking Role Play
L.	Working as a Non-Family Member in a Family Firm 17. We Are Family
M.	Working With People With Disabilities 18. Puzzled Perceptions 19. Sara's Acting Strange Lately
N.	Working With People of a Different Age 20. The Older Employee 21. The College Graduate
O.	Promoting Nondiscrimination 22. Diversity Incidents
P.	Promoting Diversity 23. Affirmative Action at Ole State
Q.	Promoting Inclusion 24. The Inclusive Workplace

1

Your Pie Chart

- Purpose:*
1. To increase awareness of your own cultural background and how it compares to that of others.
 2. To raise awareness of the importance of self-identity based on affiliations with groups.
 3. To consider the influence of self-identity on individuals' experiences in organizational settings.

Preparation: None

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

BACKGROUND

Personal characteristics (some changeable, others not), which may influence individuals' basic self-image and sense of identity, may also influence experiences in the workplace. **Primary dimensions of diversity** are essentially unchangeable personal characteristics (e.g., sex, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities). **Secondary dimensions of diversity**, on the other hand, are changeable personal characteristics that are acquired and may be modified or abandoned throughout life (e.g., education, income, marital and parental status, religion, political affiliation, work experience). People also distinguish themselves in many other ways, such as in their choices of collegiate fraternities or sororities, hobbies, activities, clothing and grooming style,

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and music. Of course, secondary characteristics are not completely self-determined; educational background, work experience, income, and marital status are affected by others' decisions. However, people generally have more control over secondary dimensions of diversity than over primary dimensions.

Because individuals' sense of identity is influenced by self-selected groups, this exercise examines how people categorize themselves in their group affiliations along the many different dimensions of both types of diversity.

PROCEDURE

1. Working individually, create a pie chart identifying group affiliations that have some importance in your self-concept. These affiliations may be based on any of the primary or secondary dimensions of diversity mentioned above or on some other personal characteristic that is particularly important to you (e.g., cat or dog lover, fan of favorite sports team or musician). Indicate the approximate importance of each group affiliation by the size of the slice of pie that you assign to it. (10 minutes)

2. Participate in a discussion based on the following questions: (remaining time)
 - a. What did you learn about yourself?

 - b. What surprised you the most?

 - c. What group affiliations were mentioned the most?

2

People Like Us

- Purpose:*
1. To apply concepts of intergroup dynamics to everyday problems that people face.
 2. To raise awareness of the underlying group dynamics in organizational settings.
 3. To consider the influence of how others categorize them on individuals' experiences in the workplace.

Preparation: None

Time: 60 to 75 minutes

BACKGROUND

Categorizations of others are made along the many different dimensions of diversity, both primary and secondary. When people have little or no experience in working together, initial categorizations, which are likely to be along the highly visible and primary dimensions of diversity such as sex, race, and age, may result in stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. A **stereotype** is a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people. Stereotyping is a cognitive activity, related to thinking, learning, and remembering distinctions between various groups of people. People who display **prejudice**, or a negative attitude toward members of other groups, are engaging in an emotional activity. Finally, **discrimination**, a behavioral activity, is

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exhibited in how people treat members of other groups and in what they decide about others.

We have reason to be concerned about all three of these phenomena. All of us may be targets of or engage in stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. This exercise examines the effects of how members of different groups are categorized by others on their experiences in the workplace.

PROCEDURE

1. The instructor will guide participants in the formation of discussion groups based on primary dimensions of diversity.
2. As a group, answer the following question: "What are the primary problems that people like us experience in this organizational setting?" Select the three problems that bother you the most. (20 minutes)
3. The instructor will provide instructions for the remainder of the exercise.

REFERENCES

- Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*, vol. 2 (4th ed., pp. 357–411). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Hunter, T. D. (Ed.) (2009). *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination*. New York: Psychology Press.

3

Becoming a Minority

- Purpose:*
1. To expose you to cultural differences between yourself and others in a self-chosen environment that is unfamiliar to you.
 2. To increase understanding of how cultural differences influence feelings of comfort and relationships between people in social settings.

Preparation: Complete assignment

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

BACKGROUND

If they have a choice, people generally choose to associate with others whom they see as similar to themselves in familiar settings. It can be difficult for students who have grown up in a homogeneous environment to understand and appreciate individuals from backgrounds that are different from their own. However, the demographic composition of the labor force around the world has become more diverse in recent years on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, and many other primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. As a result, employers whose management practices were once appropriate for a homogeneous group of employees have had to make adjustments to attract and retain talented individuals from diverse groups. Given these changes, most workers will not be effective at their jobs unless they acquire skills in dealing with culturally different coworkers

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This exercise was prepared by Renate R. Mai-Dalton. It is reprinted from Renate R. Mai-Dalton, Exposing business school students to cultural diversity: Becoming a minority, *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, Volume 9, Number 3, 1984-5. Used with permission.

as superiors, subordinates, and peers. This exercise gives you the opportunity to personally experience cultural differences in an unfamiliar setting.

PROCEDURE

1. The following assignment will expose you to a new situation, require you to observe your surroundings carefully, and ask you to describe both what you felt and what you think others might have felt to have you among them. Your task is to go to an unfamiliar place and observe what you see. You may go with someone you know, but your focus should be on your own experience and what you make of it. To give you some ideas about possible places to visit, here are examples of previous choices:
 - a. A member of a particular religious congregation attended services at a different religious congregation or one that was primarily composed of members of a different race.
 - b. A participant with sight visited a school for the blind; one with hearing visited a school for the deaf.
 - c. A participant with a particular sexual orientation went to a party primarily attended by people with different sexual preferences.
 - d. A participant who was able to walk spent an afternoon at the local mall in a wheelchair.
 - e. A participant who did not ordinarily engage in physical exercise spent time in the weight-lifting room at a fitness center.
 - f. A younger participant visited a nursing home.
 - g. An adult participant played laser tag in an entertainment arena with a group of children.
 - h. A woman went to a car auction.
 - i. A man went to a party held to sell cookware products.
 - j. A woman attended a basketball game between her alma mater and its archrival at the archrival's home arena wearing her school colors.

There are, of course, many other possibilities. Choose a setting that you sincerely want to learn about; this will allow you to maintain your integrity and justify your visit. Do not choose a setting where you would feel like an intruder into someone's privacy, however, and do not place yourself in a situation that is physically dangerous. If in doubt, check in advance as to whether your presence is acceptable to the group.

