DIVERSITY RESISTANCE

IN ORGANIZATIONS

EDITED BY

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This book is dedicated to those who show up for work every day,
who do their best, and who attempt to make a positive
impact on their institutions and on society,
in spite of the resistance they confront

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The Many Faces of Diversity Resistance in the Workplace

Kecia M. Thomas and Victoria C. Plaut

> As we commemorate EEOC's 35th anniversary this summer, it is sad to
> note the increase in recent years of the same type of behavior which com-
> pelled our nation to act 36 years ago.
>
> Ida L. Castro, Chairwoman of U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity
> Commission

Resistance to diversity is not a new or emerging issue. Every society
and culture has confronted resistance to new immigrants, diverse
ideologies, and simply different ways of being. The arguments
against the abolition of slavery, voting and civil rights (Van Buren,
1996; Dass & Parker, 1999), and continuing debates about domestic
partner and immigration legislation suggest that even in the twenty-
first century, the United States still struggles with issues related to
race, color, culture, language, and sexual identity. In fact, despite
increasing explicit pronouncements of tolerance for diversity, actual
accounts of workplace discrimination are on the rise (Wooten &
James, 2004). In contrast to the past, instances of resistance are not
as vocal nor as transparent, thus making them more difficult to deci-
pher and confront. Our discomfort, anxieties, fears, stereotypes, and
anger persist and derail attempts at creating an inclusive society and
culture, both inside as well as outside organizational life.

The topic of diversity is an enduring and likely permanent issue
within organizational life. Common organizational efforts related
to diversity within the workplace largely focus on recruitment and
retention, and human resource development efforts related to diver-

sity such as training, mentoring, and networks. More systemic efforts that address leadership and organizational development have also been offered. In addition to a growing academic literature related to the issue of workplace diversity, there is an emerging industry targeted toward supporting organizations in their attempts to achieve and sustain diversity and its benefits while also avoiding the potential conflicts that can be related to it.

Yet despite the growing interest in diversity and the implementation of various initiatives related to it, costly problems persist. Continuing examples of workplace discrimination, harassment, and class action lawsuits that center on issues of employee difference reflect resistance to diversity at all levels of organizations. The term *diversity resistance* may immediately bring to mind images of overt, hostile, and intentional forms of one-on-one intimidation and violence targeted to minority group members. This certainly would demonstrate one form of diversity resistance. Yet there are likely many other forms that are more difficult to discern and which might even appear to be standard workplace behavior or practice. The goal of this volume is to shed light on the multiple and complex facets of diversity resistance and better understand its impact on worker and workplace well-being and functioning. Our collective goal is to promote greater conversation and investigation into diversity resistance so that individually and organizationally it can be prevented, or at least better understood and addressed when it does occur.

The role of this particular chapter is to introduce the topic of resistance to diversity. In order to accomplish that goal we will begin with a discussion of what we know about resistance in organizations. This more general conversation on resistance will focus on resistance to organizational change. We will then narrow our focus to the topic of resistance to diversity, which in many ways reflects a resistance to this unique form of change in the workplace. Different conceptualizations of diversity resistance will be shared before presenting our typology of diversity resistance. Next we will move to a conversation about the consequences and costs of unattended diversity resistance for individuals and their workplaces. We will conclude by offering social psychological and organizational explanations for diversity resistance and directions for what might be done about it.

Resistance: An Od Perspective

Most of what we know about resistance in organizations is actually tied to organizational change. Resistance to change often is rooted in fears about an uncertain future, the relinquishment of the familiarity of a comfortable present, and perhaps frustration over the lack of control one may experience. When related to organizations, change is often a reflection of a perceived loss of status, power, and influence as well as uncertainty (French & Bell, 1999). Often resistance to change is expressed in worker emotions which may range from anger, fearfulness, and anxiety to mourning one's perceived loss (French & Bell, 1999). Workers experiencing especially strong and negative emotions related to the impending change in their workplace may even attempt to derail or sabotage change efforts.

Organizational scholars have been very proactive in providing guidance to organizations that are undergoing change. These recommendations often center on communication and involvement. At the foundation of these recommendations is the expectation that if employees feel involved in the change and if they frequently receive honest and straightforward communication about the change (rather than hear about it through rumor and innuendo), they will experience less anxiety and less resistance to it. Another strategy is to justify the impending change by communicating and demonstrating that the current system or way of doing things is unsatisfactory and even threatening to the organizations and therefore to workers' employment. Another means of moving through resistance is to hold workers accountable for learning and adapting to the change forthcoming and allowing persistent resistors to identify other sources of employment.

In many ways the growing attention and rates of demographic growth in the workplace is a form of organizational change. The 1988 Hudson Institute report, *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987), was an attempt to communicate to both organizations and to the labor force that there was a major change on the horizon that would not only impact the recruitment and retention of workers, but also the career development and workplace relationships of the employees themselves (Thomas, 2005).

Yet the changes brought on by diversity are also unique, especially since these changes have prompted organizations and workers to

confront the still very taboo topic of race as well as gender, and even sexuality. As Tatum (1999) puts it, there is nothing worse than being called a racist. Expressing discomfort or anxiety therefore about the changing demographics of the labor force has meant that employees could not freely address their diversity related fears and anxiety, nor could organizations openly confront these issues. Americans' strong individualistic value systems further drive conversations about race and diversity underground or make them taboo (Schofield, 1986). In a society that believes in pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, conversations about race, power, and privilege simply seem irrelevant or are just too uncomfortable to pursue.

Diversity Resistance

Educators have been on the forefront of discussing and analyzing diversity resistance. The focus of their discussions about resistance has largely been on classroom dynamics and student responses to diverse faculty and course content. For example, Tatum (1992) talks about the emotional responses that students experience in college classes that address issues around race. When these emotional responses such as shame, guilt, or anger are not confronted and addressed, resistance is created. This resistance subsequently interferes with students' abilities to intellectually understand and master the material that motivated the resistance initially (Tatum, 1992).

Helms and colleagues (2003) also talk about resistance to diversity in regards to majority students' emotional responses to diversity content. In addition to outlining students' emotional reactions, Helms et al. (2003) also discuss the outcomes of students' diversity resistance as such as punishment and racial harassment directed to minority faculty. Students punish their instructors by disengaging in diversity courses. Students "turn off" to the class and the instructor through their absenteeism, tardiness, or disruptive and unprofessional behavior, which sadly interferes with their ability to learn the material. Students also engage in the racial harassment of their minority instructors, who often are responsible for diversity courses, by submitting poor evaluations and demoralizing the professionals who are held accountable for these students' educations (Helms, Malone, Henze, Satiani, Perry, & Warren, 2003).

Organizational scholars have talked about resistance to diversity and diversity initiatives largely in terms of White male backlash (Solomon, 1991). This backlash has largely focused on the emotional responses of White males who perceive growing interest in diversity as a threat to their career opportunities and development. Within the context of work, these negative emotions are largely driven by feelings that White men are being outnumbered and that other workers, presumably unqualified women and minorities, are taking away their opportunities and jobs (Jacques, 1997).

A more recent trend in the organizational literature is to discuss resistance as an organizational paradigm or perspective as it relates to diversity (Dass & Parker, 1999). A resistance perspective is one characterized by a dominant response to diversity that is reactive and which includes denial, avoidance, defiance, and/or manipulation (Dass & Parker, 1999). Two of the three diversity paradigms offered by Thomas and Ely (1996), namely the *discrimination and fairness paradigm*, and the *access and legitimacy paradigm*, reflect organizational perspectives about diversity in which underrepresented and historically and socially marginalized workers are discriminated against and expected to assimilate (*discrimination and fairness*) or only accepted for their expected ability to offer organizations entry into their ethnic communities (access and legitimacy). Both paradigms reflect an organizational inability to perceive and enact diversity as a critical opportunity for employee and organizational learning that could subsequently enhance institutional effectiveness, which is their third paradigm, *learning and effectiveness* (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Our working definition of diversity resistance is outcome based and therefore it moves beyond focusing on emotions and seeks to understand both the individual and organizational behaviors and practices that impede diversity initiatives and the access and fair treatment of minority (broadly defined) workers in organizations. With that in mind, we define *diversity resistance* as *a range of practices and behaviors within and by organizations that interfere, intentionally or unintentionally, with the use of diversity as an opportunity for learning and effectiveness.*

At the interpersonal level, diversity resistance can therefore involve the rejection, exclusion, harassment and/or subordination of others based upon differences, as well as more obvious overt, hostile, and intentional actions and hate crimes. At the level of the orga-

nization, diversity resistance ultimately involves the systemic rejection, exclusion, harassment, and/or subordination of workers from minority groups via organizational policies or practices. Like prejudice, resistance to diversity reflects a continuum (Allport, 1954) of both unintentional and conscious choices that can have deleterious career and well-being consequences for minority workers and for the organizational practices and polices designed to create fair and safe workplaces for them.

A Typology of Diversity Resistance in Organizations

Figure 1.1 provides a pictorial depiction of the ways in which diversity resistance may manifest in organizations. Two dimensions of diversity resistance are considered that focus on the issues: At what level of the organization is resistance perpetuated, and what is the nature of the resistance?

Individual resistance to diversity may reflect instances of overt and conventional prejudice, discrimination, and harassment, as well as more subtle exclusion, avoidance, distancing, and even silence in the face of others' discrimination and harassment. Organizations engage in policies and practices that resist diversity in overt and obvious ways as well as in ways that are more subtle and covert. Organizational-level forms of diversity resistance limit the opportunities for groups and communities to experience equal employment

Understanding Diversity Resistance		Levels at which diversity resistance is manifested in the workplace	
		Individual	Organizational
Manifestations of Diversity Resistance	Overt	• Verbal and physical harassment • Graffiti • Intentional and hostile forms of discrimination	• Intentional discriminatory human resource policies and practices • Retaliation
	Subtle	• Silence regarding inequities • Avoidance and exclusion based upon difference • Discrediting of ideas/individuals who are different from the norm	• Cultures of silence around diversity and discrimination • Mixed messages related to diversity • Diversity as a "non-issue" • Messages that place diversity as too time consuming/too complex • Secondary victimization

Figure 1.1 A taxonomy of diversity resistance in organizations.

opportunity, gain critical developmental opportunities needed for career development and promotion, and effectively seek recourse when interpersonal forms of diversity resistance are experienced.

Overt Cases of Diversity Resistance

Cases of overt resistance to diversity are typically easy to identify, and there are frequently institutional or societal policies and regulations in place to deal with them (Friedman & Davis, 2001). Contemporary resistance to diversity is most obvious at the individual level of analysis and frequently includes instances of discrimination and harassment (http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-race.html) such as the surprising and increasing rates of "hangmen's nooses" placed in workplaces in order to intimidate Black workers (EEOC, 2000). This trend began in the late 1990s and reflects a 400% increase in this particular form of racial harassment, an obvious form of diversity resistance (EEOC, 2000). Clearly, these types of personal attacks against minority workers are important to understand, avoid, and remedy, especially given the rise in these attacks. Verbal harassment, sexual harassment, and workplace violence are also frequent forms of resistance to diversity.

The presence of workplace nooses not only represents an individual and hostile example of diversity resistance but also represents resistance at organizational levels, depending upon how organizations respond to this racial harassment. Organizational diversity resistance can reflect intentional and overt policies and practices that actively perpetuate the harassment, discrimination, and exclusion of some workers on the basis of their social group membership. The hangmen's noose example provides ample evidence of ways in which organizations overtly resist diversity. For example, Joseph Banks, a Black employee at Lockheed Martin was verbally harassed by his supervisor and eventually found a noose in his workplace. Other Black employees complained that Lockheed Martin knew of similar events but ignored them or made light of this harassment (Trigaux, 2000).

A suit against Southern Company alleged that Black employees were shortchanged in regard to promotion opportunities and compensation. Furthermore, this acceptable tolerance for treatment discrimination in pay and opportunity manifested in a hostile cli-

mate for diversity that was most visibly manifested in a dozen (some reports suggest more) nooses that were allowed to hang in the organization's facilities until after the original suit was filed (McDonald, 2003). Likewise Georgia Power, a Southern Company subsidiary, also knew about and tolerated hangmen's nooses; however, the company did not acknowledge that nooses found in workplaces where Blacks worked were intended to harass or intimidate those workers (Trigaux, 2000). The incidence of nooses at Georgia Power actually continued (and some reports suggest escalated) after Black employees sought class action suit status for racial harassment and the offensive climate that was allowed to persist for Black workers. Illegal selection and promotion practices such as those alleged against Walmart also reflect diversity resistance.

At times, individual and organizational behaviors and practices that are "well intentioned" may actually resist diversity (Mio & Awakuni, 2000). These forms of diversity resistance are especially dangerous because the individuals and leadership teams involved are frequently unaware of the harm they inflict on marginalized workers, and it is difficult for them to accept their practices or policies as averse to diversity. Subsequently, subtle and frequently well meaning and good intentioned forms of diversity resistance are rarely changed because those who perpetuate them are rarely motivated to eliminate them (Mio & Awakuni, 2000). Silence, as an individual action and as a cultural norm, is another important subtle manifestation of diversity resistance that rarely gets discussed.

Subtle Forms of Diversity Resistance

Individual Level. The passive acceptance of others' discrimination is one frequent form of diversity resistance. Silence in the face of others' discrimination, harassment, and mistreatment only serves to reinforce the resistance and does nothing to challenge it. Certainly bystanders who witness the placement of nooses in offices, cubicles, and workplaces in many ways are accessories to those acts. Ted Gignilliat, a 20-year White worker at Lockheed Martin had remained silent in the face of Black coworkers' racial harassment and hangmen's nooses for several years until an injury revealed to him what mistreatment can feel like for Black workers (Trigaux, 2000). Once he began reporting racist occurrences and the nooses to supervisors, he, too, became a target of harassment. The harassment became so

bad that eventually he changed his home phone number in order to stop the threats he received (Trigaux, 2000).

Other more subtle forms of individual-level diversity resistance often reflect interpersonal discrimination, namely exclusion, avoidance, and social distancing (Lott & Maluso, 1995). For example, Thomas (2005) discusses how social distancing in the workplace denies opportunities for minority career development and mobility. Dominant group workers distance themselves from others who belong to more marginalized groups for many reasons. For example, potential male mentors may distance themselves from women because they fear the perception that the relationship is romantic or that the female protégé may develop romantic feelings. Women may also be distanced if stereotypes are embraced that suggest they are incompetent or have less of a "payback period" due to less work commitment (Cox, 1994) as compared to male protégés. These stereotypes and beliefs frequently create barriers to receiving the career-related benefits of mentoring, especially in industries or work environments that are male dominated. Research by Dreher & Cox (1996) also suggests that there are some very real financial losses that result from not having a White male mentor, specifically. In their study of MBAs, those with a White male mentor had a $7000 salary advantage over those that had no mentor, or a mentor who was a person of color or a woman. That is, financially, having a female mentor or a mentor that was a person of color was equivalent to not having any mentor! Therefore, distancing of White men (especially) from women and members of ethnic minority groups may be particularly harmful both professionally and financially.

Organizational forms of diversity resistance can also be covert and passive, for example when organizations engage in secondary victimization (Murphy, 2001). When minority group members have no recourse for the discrimination they confront and when there are no viable alternatives for seeking a resolution to their harassment and discrimination out of fear they will be further victimized, secondary victimization occurs. This experience can eventually lead the victimized to accept (and in some cases rationalize) the prejudice directed toward them (Pharr, 1988).

Another more subtle form of organizational resistance to diversity can be explained as *ethnic drift* (Lefkowitz, 1994). For example, unconscious institutionalized practices of assigning minority newcomers supervisors of their same ethnicity create limited oppor-

tunities for organizational entry and career development for minority workers (James, 2000). The good intention of pairing a new worker and supervisor based upon ethnicity in order to build upon their expected similarities may unintentionally limit the career-related opportunities of those new workers and their organizations to accrue the benefits of a new perspective in a variety of organizational units or divisions.

A related form of subtle and organizational resistance to diversity is the prevalence of "access and legitimacy" paradigms and belief systems in organizations (Thomas & Ely, 1996). These belief systems encourage surface-level diversity but deny opportunities for deeper level diversity to surface as an opportunity for organizational learning and greater effectiveness. These organizations frequently create opportunities for inclusion, but only in divisions or units that on the surface appear related to minority issues, such as a targeted (minority) marketing campaign. Although marginalized group members may find homes in these organizations, they are pigeon-holed into one function and will frequently end up feeling exploited and used. When they leave the organization, the organization suffers the loss of not having integrated their unique perspective throughout the entire firm (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

More covert forms of diversity resistance may also be indirect such as when cultures of intolerance are created that allow other more hostile and overt forms of resistance to be explained away as mere coincidence. During the time in which Georgia Power was accused of racial discrimination and harassment, most visibly through the placement of hangmen's nooses, the company readily acknowledged at least five instances where nooses were left on company property. However, the company claimed that only one of those nooses was intended to racially harass and intimidate workers. Furthermore, Georgia Power chief David Ratcliffe commented that, "It's not uncommon for line workers during bad weather to practice tying knots for the purposes of their job (Trigaux, 2000)." How is it that such an obvious reliance on a visible and historic symbol of intolerance and hate can be so easily explained away? What was it about Georgia Power (then) that made it acceptable to explain nooses away as a diversion? Taboos persist, especially when connected to race, that permit the myth of color blindness to become the norm in organizations that ultimately create barriers to inclusiveness, fairness,

and diversity by implicitly excusing intolerance (Thomas, Mack, & Montagliani, 2004).

Diversity resistance is a relatively unexplored topic within human resources, yet it has costly implications for organizations that allow it to persist. Workers that experience this resistance incur costs to their ability to gain employment, to their opportunities for career development, and even to their health in the form of work-related stress.

The Costly Outcomes of Diversity Resistance

One significant outcome of resistance to diversity is conflict. Certainly at the foundation of interpersonal discrimination and hate crimes in organizations is the internal conflict some employees experience between whom they believe should work in their workplace and whom should not. They seek to eliminate this conflict by intimidating minority workers or engaging in otherwise negative behaviors that would motivate minorities to leave. It is relatively easy to see discrimination and harassment as likely outcomes of resistance. It is more difficult to see other forms of conflict that come out of resistance to diversity.

Friedman and Davidson (2001) discuss conflict related to diversity as occurring as first-level conflict and second-level conflict. First-level conflict is the actual discrimination and harassment already discussed. Second-level conflict is related to the more covert and hidden forms of resistance that impede organizations' abilities to effectively resolve first-order conflict. That is, second-level conflict may actually represent conflict about how to address workplace discrimination and harassment, how diversity is defined, and which diversity strategies to pursue. Affirmative action is clearly one of those diversity strategies about which employees may have vastly different opinions that they are hesitant to express due to fear of escalating conflict. Unexpressed sentiments can lead to autistic hostility that derails other diversity efforts (Friedman & Davidson, 2001).

Organizational Level Costs

Diversity resistance leads to financial, productivity, developmental, and emotional costs. Watson & Hoffman's (1996) research suggests that managers spend up to 42% of their time related to the resolu-

tion of workplace conflict. There are very significant financial costs related to the settlements and payoffs related to discrimination and harassment suits (Thomas & Davis, 2006). The fees paid to legal teams also represent a significant financial liability. Levine (1998) discusses the costs of conflict as not only financial but also related to productivity, continuity, and the emotions involved. The loss of employee time is reflected in productivity costs. Continuity costs are experienced through employee turnover, absenteeism, and even disengagement. Emotional costs are experienced as a loss of workplace morale and even the sullied image that results when organizations are accused of discrimination suits.

Individual-Level Costs

Individual employees also incur the costs of diversity resistance. Certainly overt discrimination and interpersonal discrimination encountered through social distancing, exclusion, and avoidance create glass ceilings for minority employees by denying them access to informal lines of communication, psychosocial support, and developmental opportunities and relationships, as well as financial benefits (Thomas, 2005).

For targets of diversity resistance, the psychological costs are experienced as lowered self-esteem, lowered efficacy for one's role or job, burnout, and stress. The stress of negotiating a hostile work climate is also likely related to significant physical- and health-related costs of diversity resistance such as cardiovascular disease (Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, & Steele, 2001). These unique stressors for workplace minorities make them especially susceptible to diseases related to stress that are likely stemming from the chronic and everyday nature of workplace discrimination. The risk of interpersonal violence associated with diversity resistance is also a significant safety and health risk. Women of color seem especially at risk for these health-related costs, given their dual minority status that predisposes them to being targets of both racial and sexual harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006) and more likely to incur the health-related costs of ongoing discrimination (Mays, Coleman, & Jackson, 1996).

Explanations for Diversity Resistance

Explanations for Overt Forms of Resistance

The persistence of workplace discrimination and harassment, specifically, can be explained by multiple individual difference, cognitive, motivational, and cultural factors. In terms of individual differences, individual hostility (e.g., hostile sexism) and value orientations (e.g., authoritarianism) can drive discrimination. From a more cognitive perspective, stereotypes about certain groups are widely known and can lead to evaluating employees on the basis of category membership rather than individual merit—especially when the target is in the minority or there is a lack of perceived fit between their category and occupation (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991). Furthermore, when a target disconfirms a stereotype (e.g., a non-nurturing woman leader) she is likely to be subtyped (e.g., "career woman"), leaving the original stereotype intact. Numerous motivational factors also explain the persistence of discrimination. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people not only categorize individuals into ingroups and outgroups, but they also confer positive distinctiveness on their own groups because they are motivated to enhance self-esteem, and, therefore, prejudice rises when self-esteem is threatened. Sinclair and Kunda (2000) found that men disparaged a female manager when given negative feedback, but not positive feedback, by her; however, the same difference was not found when the manager was male. Other motivations include competition for resources (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), maintaining power over subordinate groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and concern for the ingroup (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006).

Explanations for Subtle Forms of Resistance

What currently makes discrimination and harassment more insidious is the fact that in the last few decades, racism and sexism seem to have gone undercover. Whereas explicit forms of prejudice and discrimination have decreased in many settings, implicit, subtle, or covert forms of prejudice persist. For example, modern racists

(McConahay & Hough, 1976) and sexists (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) express prejudice in a more socially acceptable way than blatant racists and sexists: through support for policies that happen to disadvantage Blacks and women. Aversive racists may even endorse egalitarian values but, because of norms against overt racism, can't admit their own racial bias and then discriminate when the situation provides them with a seemingly race-neutral excuse (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). For the ambivalent sexist, who adheres to both hostile sexism (negative feelings towards women) and benevolent sexism (affectionate and chivalrous feelings toward women), the latter provides a convenient cover for discriminatory behavior (Glick & Fiske 2001). Finally, implicit racism and sexism, which operate unconsciously, can be present in individuals who aim to be fair, but it can go undetected and therefore unaccompanied by motivation to change (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994). Discriminatory behavior is also reinforced implicitly in cultural products (television shows, advertisements, films, Web sites) that guide our perceptions of people from different groups and affect interracial and inter-gender communication (Orbe & Harris, 2001). Cultural ideologies also shape ways individuals perceive and evaluate minority group members. For example, color blindness, which advocates ignoring difference and treating people as all the same, ironically increases bias toward ethnic minorities (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), and protestant work ethic ideology is linked to stronger anti-black attitudes (Katz & Hass, 1988). Cultural norms within organizations can also lead to increased discrimination. The more normatively acceptable it is to harbor prejudice against a certain group, the more willing people are to express it, joke about it, and discriminate against group members (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002).

Silence as a Form of Resistance

But in this era of increased condemnation of discrimination, why do individuals remain silent in the face of others' discrimination and harassment? Various social–psychological explanations can help us understand this lack of action, in particular, those associated with Latané and Darley's (1970) five-step model of helping. First, individuals have to notice that discrimination is occurring. Given that discrimination can occur in subtle or institutionalized ways (not always perpetrated by individuals with explicit intent to harm), this

can be hard to do. If individuals are distracted, or are preoccupied by self-concerns such as getting their jobs done, they may not be fully aware of these behaviors. Second, individuals have to code behaviors as discriminatory, which will fail if they perceive them as "none of their business" or as sufficiently ambiguous to determine whether a transgression took place. (Did he really harass her or was he just mildly flirting?) Even if individuals think an action is wrong, they might fall prey to pluralistic ignorance—misperceiving the social norm and believing that other people (who are also not explicitly expressing any concern) believe the action is more acceptable than they do. Third, individuals have to take personal responsibility. Unfortunately, being in a group can actually decrease the chances of offering help, through a process known as diffusion of responsibility (someone else either has already done something about this or will do something). Fourth, individuals have to decide how to help and feel competent to act. An individual might not feel skilled in addressing a discriminatory behavior and might not realize that a little effort can go a long way (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Fifth, the individual has to act. If there are costs associated with voicing a complaint, silence will prevail.

There are tremendous potential costs to labeling someone a racist or a harasser—costs that could involve not only embarrassment but also losing one's job. Relatedly, people typically don't like to be the whistle-blower, to rock the boat, or to appear deviant. The pressure of normative, majority influence can compel people to stay silent even when a behavior is unambiguously wrong (Asch, 1955). In addition, individuals engage in self-protective processes. The desire to believe one lives in a meritocracy can lead to making defensive personal attributions for others' negative outcomes (e.g., blaming the victim). To the extent that individual targets are blamed for transgressions against them and discriminatory behavior is justified and rationalized, change will not occur.

Micro Solutions

Are there, then, solutions for these issues? Given the socially entrenched, and often implicit and covert nature of some of these processes, changing individual behavior poses a significant challenge. Solutions that have been offered for reducing prejudice and discrimination include intergroup contact (Allport, 1954), coop-

erative learning (Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney, & Snapp, 1978), perspective-taking (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), and encouraging a common identity (Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1993). Attempts at changing norms could also yield some success. When people are led to think that their perceptions of minority group members are more stereotypical than are others' they endorse fewer stereotypes (Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). Encouraging individuals to be cognizant of their racial, gender, and ideological biases could also help. Efforts can also be made to decrease the tendency for observers of discriminatory action to remain silent. These include encouraging personal accountability so that individuals do not simply believe that someone else is going to intervene, fostering more open communication about people's true feelings about discriminatory behaviors so that people don't misperceive social norms, clarifying the simple steps that can be followed for intervening so that individuals can feel competent in reacting to such behavior, and minimizing the personal costs associated with reporting discrimination.

Macro Explanations for Resistance

Organizations by themselves do not choose to discriminate, harass, nor devalue diversity; individuals engage in those behaviors. Therefore, all of the individual-level explanations offered for diversity resistance apply when attempting to understand organizational behavior, especially that of leaders. Leaders establish the values and in many ways drive the cultures of organizations. They establish the human resources policies and practices that can support or denigrate attempts to create inclusive workplace climates. Therefore, the values and practices of leaders, especially as organizational role models, deserve extra scrutiny in understanding why and how organizations resist diversity.

Although organizations are driven by human behaviors and inadequacies, organizations are also microcosms of the larger society. Thomas, Mack, and Motaglinai (2004) suggest that the resistance perpetuated by organizations is simply a reflection of the larger cultural ideologies that resist inclusion and diversity, such as the colorblind ideal, the society as a melting pot, and the meritocracy myth. Each of these ideologies may on their surface appear to support

diversity, but at their foundation each really supports sameness, homogeneity, assimilation, and maintaining the status quo (Plaut, 2002).

Wooten & James (2004) suggest that the dominant routines of organizational life prevent organizations from effectively identifying and addressing and rectifying workplace discrimination. Two "routine"-based explanations offered are that: (1) organizations rarely engage in reflective (double-loop) learning, and (2) organizations adopt defensive routines when events occur (like public claims of harassment and discrimination). Organizational leaders rarely look to their existing values and culture to better understand the occurrence of bias and discrimination. Instead, when these events occur, they deny claims, defend the organization (and at times justify the organization), and use the mere existence of EEO as a rationale for why discrimination could not possibly occur (Wooten & James, 2004).

In many ways, the mere existence of EEO policies may let organizations off the hook; after all, the principle of fairness is typically one in which there is ample agreement. However, when initiatives and practices to support EEO and fairness are actually put into effect, there may be widespread disagreement (Van Buren, 1996). Van Buren also argues that workers are not resistant to the idea of fairness and EEO, but they " … are resistant to programs that seek to *implement* the value of equal employment opportunity (p. 22)." That is, programs that seek to dismantle existing norms that may be disadvantageous to minority and marginalized groups, and those that challenge ways of working together, frequently face resistance. Furthermore, the more underrepresented groups become better represented (thus potentially shifting systems of power), the more resistance occurs, especially if dominant groups begin to feel under siege, threatened, and that the larger culture is under attack (Van Buren, 1996).

Like Thomas, Mack, and Montagliani (2004), Van Buren (1996) suggests that managerial resistance to programs that support inclusion in organizations is largely driven by myths. These myths include the belief that discrimination is something of the past, that existing disparities among groups based upon demographic differences is due to differences in merit, that the organization lacks the resources for strong EEO programs, and that these programs do not support the business case for diversity. The prevalence of these myths are striking when you consider them in contrast to the national context

in which multimillion-dollar settlements occur almost weekly for workplaces found guilty of discrimination and harassment.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for ridding organizations of diversity resistance is to address it at its multiple levels and in its many varieties. Certainly organizational leaders must accept the charge of better understanding how their work environments may actually reinforce and promote interpersonal discrimination and harassment in its most hostile and subtle forms. Understanding how systems of privilege (Thomas, 1996) create opportunities for some workers and deny opportunities for others is an important lesson that can help leaders better critique existing policies and practices. Like individuals, organizations, namely their leaders, need the motivation to develop in their own diversity consciousness (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). The frequency of settlement and court cases and the significant financial costs incurred (the business case for diversity) do not appear to be motivation enough (Litvin, 2006).

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2

Understanding and Defusing Resistance to Diversity Training and Learning

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> Resistance can be one of the most difficult aspects of educating about diversity and social justice.
>
> Goodman (2001, p. 64)

We agree. The best-planned educational experiences can be disrupted by participant behaviors that are unpredictable, distracting, argumentative, or even threatening. Take, for example, the following account from the third author: A diversity training workshop was held at a U.S. chemical company, and managers and leaders were strongly encouraged to attend. Topics included race, culture, gender, and sexual orientation. During the sexual orientation segment, while a consultant was debriefing the whole group, several participants surrounded a colleague sitting in the back row after he pulled out and opened a large folding knife and began vigorously tapping the blade on his thigh.

This chapter addresses resistance to diversity training in U.S. organizations. For purposes of this chapter, *diversity training* is referred to as a form of *diversity learning* accomplished through formal classes and workshops, which is the focus of most U.S. research. Diversity learning can also take place outside such settings, including through team- and project-based work experiences, mentoring relationships, and other interactions. Diversity learning, at its best, involves awareness as well as behavior and skill building, and thus implies change. Unfortunately, diversity learning outside of formal