

Critical Reflection II
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The three articles reviewed for this critical reflection discussed the benefits and challenges of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. The authors discussed diversity along many dimensions: race, ethnicity/culture, gender, age, educational background, etc. (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Mor Barak, 2000; Richard & Johnson, 2001). Each article defined steps that an organization should take in the process of creating a more diverse work environment. Mor Barak expanded the concepts described in the other two articles by including community involvement, inclusion of people of low socioeconomic status, and creating global interactions and dialogue in his definition of inclusion (2000). [Good.](#)

This year, I am doing my practicum SAFEHOME, the domestic violence agency in Johnson County. Therefore, I analyzed these three articles from the perspectives of a social worker and an intern in a non-profit. In this reflection, I will analyze topics from the articles that are relevant to my current work at SAFEHOME and my future work in the non-profit world. [Good overview.](#)

Critique

The three articles reviewed for this reflection were written with the intended audience being (for the most part) the for-profit business community. Since I intend to work in the non-profit world, I focused on the discussion of the benefits of diversity, rather than the ways that diversity can sometimes hinder immediate profits. [Good.](#) While the authors discussed some of the benefits of diversity such as creativity and a wide range of perspectives, there was little discussion of how a diverse organization can better serve its consumers. The benefit to consumers is an essential element of diversity from a social work values perspective. From my

perspective, the articles were disappointing at time because the authors were so business-oriented.

Based on Richard and Johnson's description, I understand "diversity orientation" to mean an interconnected group of policies and procedures that aim to increase workplace diversity and create an environment where all employees feel valued and involved in the decision-making process (2001). The authors differentiated between organizations that had a few diversity-related policies but were not truly invested in developing their workforce diversity, and organizations with a comprehensive diversity orientation (2001). The most important element of developing a diversity orientation, in my opinion, was involvement and "buy-in" of the management and staff.

[Good.](#)

While reading Richard and Johnson's 2001 article, I tried to process whether SAFEHOME has a diversity orientation. Their policies include basic Equal Opportunity language, and the staff verbalize a genuine appreciation for diversity. However, the staff is not very representative of the diverse client population we serve. I am not sure why this is the case; I think the agency probably just lacks the information on how to branch out during the hiring process. I have not been with SAFEHOME long enough to thoroughly understand their hiring and diversity-related practices. One common practice that SAFEHOME does use that was noted in the literature is using teams in the decision-making process so that everyone is involved in how the agency runs itself. [Good.](#)

Multiple authors noted that organizations, and groups of people in general, tend to alienate people who are unlike the group majority in some way (Richard and Johnson, 2001; Mor Barak, 2000). This element of the diversity discussion is particularly important to both non- and for-profits that are working on diversity issues. Even if an agency hires a diverse group of staff

people, it does not guarantee that the individual employees or the larger agency will benefit from diversity. Rather, the agency should specifically address issues that can arise in diverse groups such as group cohesion and communication (Milliken & Martins, 1996). The three articles are beneficial in that they offer organizations some specific methods for dealing with the challenges of a diverse workplace and creating an environment where everyone benefits. [Good.](#)

One way in which the readings changed my perspective on diversity was Mor Barak's widening the scope of what we can consider "diversity practices" to include involvement in the community, addressing the needs of people with low incomes, and creating global collaborations (2000). While I have thought a lot about how businesses and the larger United States community treat the working poor, I have never made the connection that this can be a diversity issue. I cannot honestly see many businesses taking Mor Barak's advice to embrace former welfare recipients because it would most likely harm their profits initially. The unfortunate reality is that the United States values the "rights" of businesses, often to the detriment of individual citizens. Inclusion of people of lower socioeconomic status is essential in social service because people who have experienced poverty and other social problems have a first-hand perspective on how these problems might be mitigated. [Good.](#)

Conclusion

My overall impression of these articles was that they were somewhat too business-oriented for my needs as future worker in the non-profit world, but that they did offer helpful advice that is certainly applicable to non-profits. [Good.](#) I thought the articles offered a fair representation of the challenges and benefits of creating a cohesive, diverse workplace and orientation. One topic I would have liked to read more about is how a diverse agency can better serve its diverse consumer population. The methods of creating a diversity orientation are

certainly applicable to SAFEHOME, and agency that values diversity but has not been very successful in developing a diverse workforce.

References

- Milliken, F. J., & Martins, L. J. (1996). Searching for common threads: Understanding diversity in organizational groups. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(2), 402-433.
- Mor Barak, M. E. (2000). The inclusive workplace: An ecosystems approach to diversity management. *Social Work*, 45(4), 339-352.
- Richard, O. C., & Johnson, N. B. (2001). Understanding the impact of human resource diversity practices on firm performance. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13(2), 177-195.

You did a great job on this reflection paper. You captured the essence of the articles and applied the knowledge to your field placement. I also appreciated your ability to identify the limitations of these business articles and yet still learn from them for our social work field. Good work!
Grade = 100