

The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice

Sociology of Race and Ethnicity

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The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 352 pp. \$27.50. ISBN 978-0-226-24623-9

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DOI: 10.1177/2332649215613305

Diversity is a word that has gained social prominence over the past 50 years, but what exactly does it mean? This question, although seemingly straightforward, can be viewed as an enigma of sorts. Berrey's book problematizes how diversity, often viewed positively, has functioned in three distinct scenarios with some interesting similarities.

The book begins by looking at admissions at the University of Michigan, a school at the forefront of the affirmative action debate. Ultimately, diversity was used in this case to help preserve affirmative action policies in admissions (or "affirmative admissions") but simultaneously used to hinder discussions of racial inequality. A striking example is one in which a student at a public event praised the administration's diversity advocacy but then shifted to a critique of what the school was doing to improve the lived experiences of students of color on campus. The administrator responded to the student by explaining that students' ability to make these comments signified the value of diversity in the learning process and how Michigan supports bringing students of diverse perspectives together. Interestingly, the administration rarely publicly referred to race in conversations about affirmative admissions and diversity but instead discussed diversity of perspectives, while race was understood to be a priority by individuals affiliated with the university.

Next, the Rogers Park neighborhood in Chicago is discussed. This neighborhood prides itself on diversity, and officials often spoke about diversity as a defining feature of the neighborhood. Conversely, the housing policies and treatment of gentrification in the area reflected principles of liberalism and colorblindness. Again, diversity was rarely spoken of explicitly

as relating to race, but diversity in this case became operationalized to mean economic diversity, and the solution was seen as mixed-income housing.

Finally, the case of the Starr Corporation is introduced. Starr is a large, highly profitable corporation that has historically been a progressive "first mover" in terms of diversity initiatives. Many important themes emerge from this case, one interesting one being the differentiation between affirmative action and diversity management. Affirmative action, according to individuals at Starr, was about compliance and reporting, much like doing taxes. On the other hand, diversity management was about bringing different people together in a way that maximizes profit in the short run. Berrey adeptly notes, in this chapter, how the short-term obsession with shareholder value has infiltrated the world of diversity management. Starr is unique in that it has its own diversity metrics on which performance is evaluated regularly, but the evaluations are only short term; nothing is done to look at long-term trends.

The analysis in this book is compelling and beautifully written. One topic mentioned in the first two cases in the book is the use of "street semiotics" to challenge the conventional language surrounding diversity and open the door for a more revolutionary conversation. Students at the University of Michigan, for example, challenged the use of diversity rhetoric and questioned the usefulness of the concept of diversity for dealing with the unequal lived experiences of students of color on campus. A further discussion of this technique and its effectiveness would have been a welcome addition to the discussions of diversity discourse.

The enlightening conclusion of the book includes a number of thought-provoking ideas and comparisons from the three cases. Although the book is by no means a case for diversity management, it is noted that although diversity can be problematic, its absence will only produce more unchecked privilege. A similar case can be made about affirmative action, which is certainly imperfect but, many argue, is better than nothing. Still, the shift from affirmative action to diversity management signifies a move away from redistributive justice, which is a theme that reappears throughout the book. Once again, it appears that diversity often serves as a symbolic shield that ultimately hinders conversations about racial inequality and civil rights. To move more toward remedial justice, Berrey suggests a critique of privilege and direct reference to what needs redress.

The conclusion also includes a compelling discussion of neoliberalism and colorblindness.

Although these conversations appear throughout the book in some ways, a more thorough integration into the book's substantive chapters would have been welcomed. Neoliberalism is discussed somewhat in the Starr Corporation case in terms of the business case for diversity and the short-term, shareholder value emphasis, but it could have been woven throughout the book in more depth.

On the whole, this book is a strong contribution to the literature on diversity, providing a complex and nuanced view of how the language of diversity functions in different areas. The minor critiques noted above should not detract from the overall value of this book. Ellen Berrey has pushed the diversity conversation forward substantially and identified areas from which future researchers can build toward a fuller understanding of the enigma of diversity.