

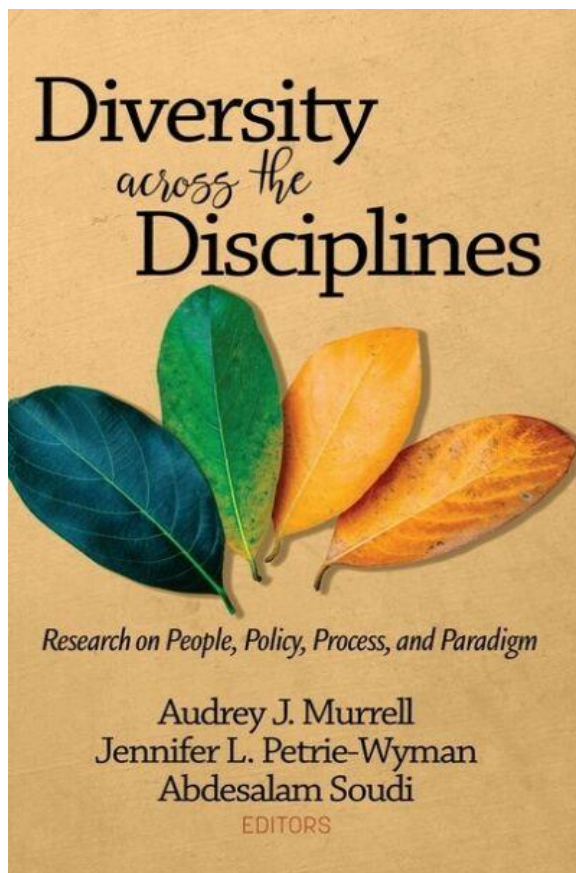
**Murrell, A. J., Petrie-Wyman, J. L., & Souidi, A. (Eds.). (2020). *Diversity across the disciplines: Research on people, policy, process, and paradigm*. Information Age Publishing.**

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After the tragic murder of George Floyd, a diverse, multicultural, and cross-generational coalition poured into American streets to embody the renewed sense of urgency toward racial justice. Chanting the names of Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and countless other unarmed Black people who have been killed by police, the movement was rooted in collective grief and frustration about the lack of concern for the incessant dehumanization of Black Americans. The sentiment behind “Black Lives Matter” spread across the globe to inspire similar displays of solidarity through direct action. Increased awareness of how systemic racism is embedded in and continuously reproduced in various institutions such as law enforcement, education, government, and corporations has sparked an unfinished global conversation around individual and systemic complicity in the subjugation of Black lives and Black futures.



It was against the backdrop of this important moment of racial reckoning when I began reading *Diversity Across the Disciplines*. While the volume was edited and published before the protests of 2020 demanding racial justice, the chapters offer a model for a collaborative multicultural approach that brings together emerging knowledge and research about the practice of diversity in multiple disciplines. The volume is a reminder of the opportunity and challenge to center the conversation and devote resources to the uncovering of multidisciplinary solutions to the problem of sustaining and nurturing the project of diversity.

The importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice is not new: it is ever-present in the work of service, scholarship, research, and pedagogy, with methodologies, theories, and practices embedded in the arts, sciences, and professional fields of education and medicine. Featuring the work of faculty, researchers, administrators, and collaborators from the University of Pittsburgh, this volume, edited by Profs. Audrey J. Murrell, Jennifer L. Petrie-Wyman, and Abdesalam Souidi, showcases Pitt's theme-based "Year of Diversity" to provide an important precedent as the institution meaningfully engages in the discourse and practice of advancing justice.

I engaged with the volume from my positionality as a doctoral student focused on educational equity. My academic interest is buoyed by professional experience as a practitioner devoted to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Advancing the values of equity and justice in predominantly White academic and health institutions in the United States requires a multidisciplinary approach. These institutions suffer from a lack of workforce and leadership diversity, disparities in service delivery models, and ineffective ways of addressing social inequities. From both academic and professional lenses, I relished the opportunity to immerse myself in works that offer instructional- and evidence-based

approaches to a compendium of diversity-related challenges.

The relevance of Pitt's applied research portfolio reverberates around local communities as well as the world. The global orientation of Pitt's research highlights transnational issues, for example, the experiences of Syrian newcomers to Pittsburgh, the organization of power among indigenous communities in Latin America, and the effects of urbanization on Ghanaian families and communities. The book is organized along the thematic sections "People," "Policy," "Process," and "Paradigm," but each chapter has implications for more than one theme or dimension.

The research featured in the volume encompasses many aspects of diverse identities, including race and ethnicity, gender, language, and other identity markers applicable within the US and beyond. The research offers insights into the depth and breadth of diversity issues plaguing Pitt's academic health center, as well as the effectiveness of government contracting initiatives to support minority-owned businesses in the City of Pittsburgh. A chapter on cultural and linguistic diversity emphasized how higher education institutions must explore the intersections of language and culture to counter English dominant ideologies. Gender identity development takes center stage in another chapter focused on perceptions and conceptualizations of gender among young children. In "Beliefs About Competence," the authors draw on the results of a longitudinal study of female STEM students and recommend interventions that focus on social psychological belonging to counter gender stereotypes about competency.

Some contributors offer instructional and actionable approaches to diversity management, which typically involves programs and practices to help leaders and decision-makers within organizations operationalize well-intentioned diversity

platitudes. The chapter on intergroup dialogue explains the process of developing a “stakeholder analysis framework” through face-to-face conversations that center cross-cultural social identities (p. 120). The art of facilitating conflict-aware conversations is the focal point of a chapter that centers “deliberative engagement” in advancing community voice in dialogue and collaboration (p. 297). These are important reminders about integrating mindfulness and “contemplative pedagogy” that result in increased capacity for empathy to support greater diversity in higher education (p. 57).

Research takes deliberate time and effort to uncover new knowledge. Application of evidence-based practices in any discipline may be impacted by resistance to change, among other barriers. The practice of research itself is often fraught with biases in process and implementation that inadvertently cause harm to research subjects, thus requiring deliberate efforts to heighten cultural awareness, competency, and agility. By interrogating power dynamics in research and scholarship that engage diverse communities, the volume offers practical reminders about equity-oriented research approaches that avoid further marginalization of people from diverse backgrounds.

The timeliness and significance of the volume are underscored by highly publicized and politicized objections to the applications of diversity work. As mainstream conversations about racial equity and justice become commonplace, we are also seeing a concerning rise of rhetoric against critical race theory, diversity programming, and cultural competency training. Following a summer of civil unrest, with protesters relentlessly calling for racial justice and accountability, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order banning taxpayer-funded “blame-focused diversity training” at federal agencies and federally funded institutions that promote “stereotyping” and “scapegoating” based on

race and gender (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). The Executive Order undermines and weakens efforts to advance the dialogue on diversity during a time when White, cisgender, and heterosexual Americans are learning about and embracing critiques of long-established racial, gender, and other social hierarchies. As of this writing, the Justice Department and a small number of federal agencies and other publicly funded institutions have already suspended diversity and inclusion offerings and related programming to comply with the federal mandate (Benner, 2020). The University of Iowa also announced that it has “paused” all diversity training, citing the need to review existing programs and offerings “that could be deemed in violation of the executive order” (Miller, 2020).

Beyond the visible and public calls for addressing institutional racism in all its manifestations, the need to uplift scholarship on diversity, equity, and social justice is paramount. The volume is instructional and relevant to promoting solutions-focused paradigms that challenge the status quo in higher education research and pedagogy. In particular, equity, diversity, and inclusion practitioners, critical scholars, educators, and P-12 administrators will gain valuable lessons for operationalizing diversity in complex and matrixed organizations. Viewing diversity from a strengths-based platform reduces the ill effects of differential privileged identities and associated power dynamics. According to the contributors of this volume, Pitt must take note of the enduring clamor among students, faculty, and community and focus on the lived realities of Black Americans. Higher education must direct resources toward research that addresses inequities in access to education, housing, and employment, among other determinants of well-being and productivity.

*Diversity Across the Disciplines* underscores the need for sustained and dedicated resources and unwavering support for multidisciplinary and collaborative research that brings to the

forefront applications of diversity, equity, and social justice in higher education and other fields. Perhaps opportunities to extend the impact of Pitt's "Year of Diversity" and build momentum will occur if collaborations with

mission-aligned research institutions grow and develop. Diversity must always be prioritized, and there has never been a more opportune moment to commit fully to advancing justice and equity through scholarship and research.

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## About the Reviewer

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