

Managing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Service Organizations: A Liberatory Justice Approach

By Rashmi Chordiya and Meghna Sabharwal
Routledge, 2024
338 pages, paperback.

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In *Managing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Service Organizations: A Liberatory Justice Approach*, Rashmi Chordiya and Meghna Sabharwal (2024) present a new and transformative perspective on a critical issue in public administration: moving beyond superficial diversity efforts to genuinely confront systemic inequities. The book emphasizes the importance of addressing systemic oppression by recognizing and embracing the diversity of social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, as called for by recent scholarship on social equity and inclusion (Chordiya and Protonentis 2024). Through its universal approach, the textbook invites public administrators to engage acutely with the principles of solidarity and justice, dismantling barriers that prevent marginalized groups from fully participating in public service. By focusing on intersectionality and multigenerational organizations, the authors reimagine public service as a space for meaningful, sustainable, and equity-centered transformation.

The book stands out from other diversity and inclusion textbooks by delving into the covert barriers that minoritized groups face and offering trauma-informed, healing-centered approaches to organizational change. Chordiya and Sabharwal analyze the neurobiological and sociological impacts of oppression, providing practical tools for fostering individual and institutional competencies in inclusive leadership. Comprising 11 thoughtfully structured chapters, the book is equipped with case studies, reflective prompts, and deep-dive resources, making it an engaging and accessible resource

for current and future public administrators. Through its innovative and thoughtful approach, *Managing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Service Organizations* challenges readers to rethink public service with an “all means all” philosophy, ensuring that equity and justice become foundational in their professional practices. The book is particularly timely, drawing on the momentum of movements like Black Lives Matter and the broader call for social justice. Focusing on public service organizations provides practitioners and scholars with valuable theoretical insights and practical frameworks for fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and liberatory justice (DEILJ). Liberatory justice builds on traditional DEI concepts, adding an emphasis on transformation, reflexivity, and collective action within praxis (CSU Dominguez Hills n.d.; Gassam Asare 2022). While the authors use the acronym DEILJ, their framework strongly incorporates accessibility, particularly in relation to disability justice, making inclusion more holistic and responsive to intersecting access needs.

Structure and Accessibility: A Practical Guide for Practitioners

The book is structured to guide readers through both the theoretical foundations and practical applications of DEILJ. It is divided into three parts: Part I introduces core concepts such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and liberatory justice; Part II builds on these to develop the Liberatory Public Service (LPS) framework; and Part III applies these ideas to real-world areas including racial justice, gender

and LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and disability justice. This clear organization helps readers understand how the LPS framework develops across the chapters, making complex ideas more approachable and applicable. Each chapter concludes with summaries, key takeaways, and reflective prompts that support critical engagement, while “deep dive” resources offer opportunities for further learning. Together, these elements make the book both accessible and valuable for students and practitioners committed to equity and justice in public service.

A Revolutionary Framework: Liberatory Public Service (LPS)

The *Liberatory Public Service* (LPS) framework is the book’s core contribution, redefining how public service organizations should operate to dismantle oppressive systems and promote genuine change. Through this framework, Chordiya and Sabharwal argue that public service must go beyond surface-level diversity efforts and fundamentally transform the functions of organizations. The framework is introduced early in the book, particularly in chapters 1 and 2, where the authors explain the key ideas behind DEILJ and discuss what oppression entails, as well as its impact on individuals and organizations. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate how public service can support healing and contribute to building strong, inclusive teams. In chapters 5 and 6, the authors connect the framework to social justice movements and strategies for creating change. The later chapters then demonstrate how to implement the framework in areas such as racial, gender, LGBTQIA+, and disability justice. This step-by-step approach helps readers understand the origins of the LPS framework and its practical application in real public service work.

The LPS framework emphasizes creating trauma-informed, healing-centered, and inclusive systems from the ground up. It advocates for environments that support marginalized groups and empower them to shape policies and decisions. Rather than just increasing representation, LPS calls for deep systemic change, ensuring public service organizations become spaces of justice, accountability, and genuine inclusion. For example, chapter 10 describes how a public agency restructured its physical workspace and procedures to prioritize accessibility for employees with disabilities, as suggested by Bearfield et al. (2023), who argue that dismantling systemic inequities requires rethinking and redesigning organizational structures that have historically excluded marginalized populations.

This framework acknowledges that public service organizations often unintentionally contribute to the very inequalities they aim to address. The authors emphasize that real change means removing harmful barriers and building supportive systems, encouraging accountability, transparency, and compassion. Chordiya and Sabharwal offer a new approach to diversity and inclusion in public administration by focusing on this complete transformation, making their work stand out from traditional approaches.

The LPS framework is built upon critical academic scholarship and insights from social justice movements. Chordiya and Sabharwal stress the importance of centering those most impacted by systemic inequities in efforts toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and liberatory justice (DEILJ) (Young 1990). This approach calls for an inner and outward transformative public service, addressing individual and systemic trauma while cultivating healing-centered practices. For example, chapter 3 describes how a public health agency implemented trauma-informed training and peer support circles to create a collective care and healing culture. The authors also emphasize the need for sustained efforts to develop organizational competence and capacity for DEILJ, highlighting that fundamental transformation requires ongoing commitment to equity. In chapters 5 and 6, the book’s contents encourage public administrators to follow the leadership of marginalized groups and integrate compassionate, liberatory practices into the core of public service, helping to dismantle oppressive barriers and replace them with nurturing, just systems that benefit all.

Key Themes: Intersectionality, Healing, and Justice

One of the strengths of *Managing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* is its focus on intersectionality. The authors examine how different forms of oppression—such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability—interact and create unique challenges for marginalized groups. By addressing these overlapping issues, Chordiya and Sabharwal provide a deeper understanding of how public service organizations can tackle multiple layers of discrimination.

Additionally, the book emphasizes the importance of a healing-centered approach, acknowledging that systemic oppression has lasting emotional and psychological impacts. The authors advocate for trauma-informed practices in public service, which sets their work apart from most

diversity literature. This focus on healing as a critical part of justice reflects the authors' commitment to addressing deep-rooted inequalities and repairing the harm they cause.

To help readers bridge the gap between theory and practice, Chordiya and Sabharwal include case studies showing how public service organizations can apply DEILJ principles in real-world scenarios. These case studies offer practical examples of successes and challenges, giving a balanced view of creating truly inclusive and equitable organizations. For example, the authors examine the struggles and achievements of organizations addressing racial injustice in the aftermath of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement. They also discuss efforts to combat gender discrimination, LGBTQIA+ exclusion, and ableism within public service, highlighting the importance of intersectional approaches to justice. These examples make the book both theoretically rich and highly practical, providing a clear guide for turning liberatory principles into actionable strategies.

A Must-Read for the Future of Public Service

At its core, this book demonstrates why and how public administrators can play a unique role in driving societal equity and justice. The authors argue that administrators must go beyond traditional bureaucratic duties and embrace their potential as change agents. By embedding DEILJ principles into every part of their work—from policy creation to service delivery—public administrators can help break down systemic oppression and build institutions that serve everyone, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

This message is not just for top-level leaders; it applies to all public servants. Chordiya and Sabharwal emphasize that building inclusive and just organizations requires a collective effort, with everyone, from frontline workers to executives, contributing to the transformation. By highlighting the importance of solidarity and shared leadership, the authors encourage readers to view their work as part of a more significant movement for social justice.

One potential improvement in managing diversity, equity, and inclusion in public service organizations would be a broader inclusion of global perspectives and case studies outside the United States. While the book focuses heavily on the U.S. public service context, adding more international examples would make it more relevant to a broader audience. Public service organizations worldwide face similar challenges related to di-

versity, equity, and inclusion; however, these challenges vary across different cultural and political landscapes. By incorporating examples from various countries, especially those in the Global South, the book can provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of how DEILJ principles can be applied in diverse contexts. This would also make the book more valuable to international scholars and practitioners, thereby expanding the global discussion on public service transformation.

Managing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Service Organizations goes beyond just a book about diversity; it calls for a new approach to public service; by introducing the Liberatory Public Service framework, Chordiya, and Sabharwal present public administrators with a clear vision for building more diverse, inclusive, healing, and just organizations. This book is a must-read for anyone dedicated to promoting equity in public service. Whether you are a student, scholar, or practitioner, it provides the tools, insights, and inspiration needed to make meaningful progress in DEILJ work. More than just a contribution to public administration, it serves as a rallying cry for those who view public service as a vehicle for liberation and justice.

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