James M. Jones, John F. Dovidio,
and Deborah L. Vietze

The Psychology of Diversity

Beyond Prejudice and Racism

Second Edition

with website

WILEY Blackwell

Praise for *The Psychology of Diversity*

This volume, more than any volume I know of, anchors our understanding of diversity in science and rational thought. Coming in these times of pushback against many things diversity, it is an inspiration, a beacon of hope that science and rigorous thought can deliver our society to a better future. It is a classic that deserves broad attention for a long time to come.

Claude M. Steele, Professor emeritus, Department of Psychology, Stanford University and author of *Churn*

At a time in history when the very concept of diversity is under attack, The Psychology of Diversity stands as a vital source of clarity and insight. The book unravels the real-world implications of diversity and inequality, exploring how they shape the lived experiences of countless individuals. While public figures try to dismiss the importance of studying social inequities, The Psychology of Diversity confronts these issues head on and provides an essential resource for anyone seeking to navigate the evolving landscape of diversity in the modern day.

Stephanie A. Fryberg, James E Johnson Professor of Psychology and founding Director of the Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity Center, Northwestern University

This is the most comprehensive survey of diversity since the groundbreaking Jones *Prejudice and Racism* volume, the undisputed bible of the field for decades. *The Psychology of Diversity*, authoritatively written by some of the field's foremost leaders, will rightfully serve as the go-to resource for students, researchers, and practitioners alike, to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This book provides a shining light of faith in science to inform and human capacity to grow. *The Psychology of Diversity* is much needed always but especially now.

Professor Susan Fiske, Eugene Higgins Professor, Psychology and Public Affairs, Princeton University

Once again, these distinguished authors have created the essential source for understanding what diversity is, why it matters, and how it can be nurtured and put to good use. They acknowledge the controversies swirling around diversity—the ideas, the program, the solutions—and meet them head on. The scope of the book is exceptional; they range from the smallest factors inside the head to the sweep of society and history. They range from the simply interpersonal to global forces, and use a coherent framework across levels. This is a likeable, readable book, suitable for college classes, as a resource for diversity professionals, as a general education for important policy matters.

Chris Crandall, Professor of Psychology, University of Kansas

As a long-time user of *Psychology of Diversity* by Jones, Dovidio, and Vietze, I was excited to hear of a new edition. My excitement paid off. The new edition is vastly updated to reflect the new research coming out. As with the previous edition, the book takes a strong theoretical approach that allows the reader to understand the psychology revolving around diversity. I love the conscious attention to the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings to society. I particularly appreciate the broad perspectives taken in this book. The book seeks to understand how diversity is perceived from both majority and minority viewpoints. Finally, the book goes beyond merely documenting problems. It seeks to provide a roadmap for solutions. I highly recommend this book to a broad range of readers

Michael Zarate, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Texas, El Paso

The authors rise to the moment by providing a definitive resource for researchers, students, policy-makers, community-leaders, and the general public on the psychology of diversity. This evidence-based review examines basic processes that are triggered when encountering people who are different from them in a variety of ways (such as based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, ability, or sexual orientation) and when they experience being treated with bias by others because of their differences. The authors elevate the discussion of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) above the current divisive political discourse and actions by providing the science of EDI that is critical to overcoming challenges to diversity, to achieving positive and equitable outcomes in society, and to navigating our everyday lives. This state-of-the-art book is essential to an understanding of modern-day diversity.

Kerry Kawakami, Walter Gordon York Research Chair in Equity and Diversity, Department of Psychology, York University

About the Authors

James M. Jones is the Trustees' Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Africana Studies at the University of Delaware. He was the Executive Director for Public Interest and the Director of the Minority Fellowship Program at the American Psychological Association. After earning his PhD in psychology at Yale University, he taught at Harvard and Howard universities. His book, *Prejudice and Racism* (1997), is a classic text on this subject. He has served as the President of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. His numerous awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship to study Calypso Humor in Trinidad, the Lewin and Distinguished Service Awards by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Black Psychologists, the James S. Jackson Lifetime Achievement Award for Transformative Scholarship from the Association for Psychological Science, and the Morton Deutsch Award for Distinguished Contributions to Social Justice from Columbia University's Teachers College. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

    John F. (**Jack**) **Dovidio** is the Carl Iver Hovland Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Public Health at Yale University. He is also a Distinguished Scientist for Diversity Science, an evidence-based diversity, equity, and inclusion consulting company that he co-founded. He has published over 500 articles, chapters, and books on topics related to prejudice and stereotyping, intergroup relations, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. He has received several awards for lifetime scholarly achievement from international psychological organizations, including the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), and the Person Memory Interest Group. He has also received several awards for teaching and mentoring (at Yale and Colgate universities, and from the American Psychological Association [APA]) and for professional service (from SPSP, SPSSI, and APA). Jack has also served

in several administrative positions, including the Dean of Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences at Yale University and the Provost at Colgate University, as well as the president of several psychological organizations. His recent books include *Unequal Health: Anti-Black Racism and the Threat to America's Health* (2023, co-authored with L. A. Penner, N. Hagiwara, and B. M. Smedley) and *States of Belonging: Immigration Policies, Attitudes, and Inclusion* (2021, co-authored with T. Jimenez, D. Schildkraut, and Y. Huo).

Deborah L. Vietze, PhD is a Professor Emerita of Psychology at the City University of New York. She began the first 10 years of her academic career as an assistant to an associate professor at The Catholic University of America. Dr. Vietze has contributed to developmental and educational psychology and public health research and policy. She has held positions at the American Psychological Association, the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education in the National Academy of Sciences, and the March of Dimes. She has been a member of numerous national foundations, federal and local boards, and organizations. Her research received support from private foundations and the federal government.

The Psychology of Diversity

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Dedication

To my daughters, Nashe Cantrell and Shelly Hairston-Jones whose lives of humility and generosity represent so well the way to be human in a diverse world.

J.M.J.

To Rita Kerins (my favorite sister), who spent her career educating students to create a more hopeful, responsible, knowledgeable, and cooperative diverse world. She continues to help our family bridge our past and our future.

J.F.D.

To my husband, daughters and sons for unwavering support and love during the writing of this book.

D.L.V.

Contents

Preface

This is the second edition of *The Psychology of Diversity*. The world has changed dramatically since the first edition was published a decade ago. Barack Obama was the president of the United States Donald Trump was elected in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020. Now, in 2025, Donald Trump returns as president of the United States. The diversity challenges remain, and its benefits may be more difficult to attain.

Demographic changes among US citizens and unprecedented rates of immigration here and globally make our social worlds dramatically more diverse. Despite, or perhaps because of, the increase in diversity, the challenges to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging have escalated. Many responses to these diversity shifts reflect increased resistance to diversity. In many political and social domains, actions against the interests of members of diverse groups and persons new to the United States have risen substantially. The United States is not the only country experiencing such changes. They are happening in many countries around the globe. The diversity divide that we discussed in the previous edition has grown broader and deeper.

These changes and challenges occur in the context of increasing political polarization. We were convinced by these conditions to revisit the first edition and update what we know about diversity and how we address it in this new climate. This second edition goes further than the first edition's subtitle, "beyond prejudice and racism." Significant obstacles to diversity remain, and its issues and concerns are far more complex. Research-based evidence—facts—are more critical than ever as a foundation for debates and informed approaches to and decisions about diversity. We aim to answer questions such as why diversity is inevitable, essential, and worthwhile; what policies and organizational structures are best suited for a diverse world; and how can we make diversity a reality that brings us together and makes us stronger, rather than fractures our society.

This edition is not simply an updated version of the first edition, though we have substantially updated the research that is the foundation for the book. Over the past decade, diversity has expanded, and so has the research literature. Diversity ideas and programs have dramatically altered our social world and become more central to our consciousness, as well as controversies. This edition considers current controversies and conflicts that surround diversity, as well as the cutting-edge research that examines them. We have also included new chapters to reflect topics of current and emerging concern, such as immigration, racial and ethnic disparities in health and healthcare, coping and resilience in the face of adversity, and interventions to effectively reduce bias and promote diversity. Beyond updated and new content, this edition reflects the evolution of our understanding of diversity-related processes. This edition presents a more expansive view of the psychology of diversity, is more international in scope, and is more integrative in its analyses. A core theme throughout this edition is that the consequences of diversity and the conditions in which diversity can benefit everyone depends on the interactions across multiple levels—individual, institutional, and cultural influences.

What Is This Book About and Who Is It For?

Increasingly, diversity is a fact of life in the United States and globally. *The Psychology of Diversity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism* (2nd edition) examines the challenges created by differences among us and the opportunities these differences offer for building more robust, more effective institutions and full participation of all members of society. This book examines the challenges diversity poses socially, culturally, and psychologically and how people, if they choose to, address and benefit from those challenges. The book is mainly for students in classes on prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination; multiculturalism and society; and intergroup relations. It should also appeal to a broad audience of people who are interested in understanding social diversity. This includes policy-makers, organizational and community leaders. The coverage is evidence-based, presenting the facts as we currently know them. These facts tell a story that we attempt to recount about past, present, and future aspects of diversity and its challenges and opportunities in everyday life.

What Is the Purpose of This Book?

The purpose of *The Psychology of Diversity* is to help people understand how differences among people produce a broad array of psychological responses that determine how they are perceived and the effects they have. Diversity does not solely focus on the experiences of members of selected traditionally disadvantaged groups or people who bring different values and cultures to new countries when they immigrate, but diversity encompasses and affects us all. People usually find comfort in being

around others similar to themselves and seek support for their views of the world and their place in it. We document that sharing varied perspectives, talents, and worldviews benefits human interaction and institutional performance.

We also discuss the resistance that diversity elicits and the benefits of overcoming it. Additionally, we focus on approaches that have been shown to produce positive outcomes and help us benefit from what makes us different from one another. This challenge of diversity is not simply to control or manage it; it is to understand and collectively draw strength from it. Increasing diversity is inevitable. We present research, case studies, and historical illustrations to show that by understanding diversity, we can more constructively navigate our everyday lives and prepare, individually and socially, for a more diverse, interdependent, and complex world.

What Is Special About This Book?

This book is subtitled *Beyond Prejudice and Racism* and devotes considerable attention to the problems of prejudice and discrimination toward diverse groups. The chapters in this book also discuss how to approach solutions to these problems and describe research that identifies techniques for improving intergroup relations. How individuals cope with stigma and discrimination and the threats they pose to their psychological and physical well-being is another focus of the current edition. We not only examine how people cope with and adapt to adversity posed by bias against them, we also consider their resilience and the contributions they make to a humanly diverse world. Moreover, this book goes beyond prejudice and discrimination to emphasize how understanding diversity offers unique insights and opportunities to better prepare people for a diverse society.

The story of diversity and its challenges is both broad and complex. This book can't tell it all, so it has particular emphases. The book is primarily social psychological in its orientation, but we consider how historical, political, educational, economic, and societal factors shape how people think about and respond to diversity. The multilevel approach spans the micro- to the macro-levels of research, the neuroscience of prejudice through the sociology and politics of diversity. Our discussions primarily center on racial and ethnic biases in the United States, partly because most research on these topics is based on people from the United States. In this edition, we expanded our coverage, in part because more research is available to address issues that affect sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, and immigrants. Social identity is also a recurring focus because it is a source of diversity, a basis of bias and discrimination, and a psychological and social resource for coping and resilience for all groups. Increasingly, these identities intersect within individuals (i.e., intersectionality) and between groups.

We also believe that understanding the challenges of diversity requires considering the particular historical, political, institutional, societal, and cultural context in which individual-level biases are embedded. To tell that story within a limited

number of pages, we have used race and ethnic relations within the United States as a thematic case study. However, we do not limit our discussion to these issues. We examine the implications of other "isms" (e.g., sexism, heterosexism, weightism) and phobias (e.g., homophobia, Islamophobia), and the global nature of diversity issues. Finally, we have included evidence-based examples of how to approach differences that effectively bring people together for mutual benefit.

Acknowledgements

About the Companion Website

The Psychology of Diversity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism is accompanied by a companion website

www.wiley.com/go/diversity2e

The website includes the following supplement:

- *Dramatic Dynamics of a Changing Landscape of the Psychology of Diversity*

Part One

Framing Diversity

Chapter 1

Psychology of Diversity
Challenges and Benefits

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Declaration of Independence,
July 4, 1776/National Archives

Major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today's increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints. High-ranking retired officers and civilian military leaders assert that a highly qualified, racially diverse officer corps is essential to national security. Moreover, because universities, and in particular, law schools, represent the training ground for a large number of the Nation's leaders, … the path to leadership must be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity. Thus, the Law School has a compelling interest in attaining a diverse student body.

Human capital, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor
Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)

We are proud to be a leader in the fight against DEI since the ideology from which it flows conflicts with America's founding principles—constitutional government and equality under the law. These are the things we believe in. Without them there is no America. You cannot have those things with DEI …. Repeatedly and in public we make these arguments to preserve justice, competence and the progress of science.

Claremont Institute, Upland, California

Introduction

This book is about diversity of those characteristics or qualities of experience that make us different from one another. Race, ethnicity, and gender are the most common differences that are mentioned in diversity conversations. But diversity is much more than demographic differences. We are different by virtue of our country of origin, our culture, sexual orientation, age, values, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, and able-bodiedness. Our psychological tendencies, abilities, or preferences are also a source of human diversity.

There are more than eight billion people on the planet, and each person is uniquely different from every other. Diversity is a global reality. Diversity becomes significant in Germany and the Netherlands when increasing numbers of immigrants arrive from Turkey, Africa, and South America. African, West Indian, and South and East Asian immigrants diversify the United Kingdom and Canada. Sub-Saharan Africans immigrate to South Africa and challenge locals for jobs and opportunities. Ethnic differences in the Pacific Islands, Eastern Europe, Canada, and many countries of Africa highlight both differences and similarities.

To this, we add the pressures created by trying to meld the diverse countries of Europe into a common union, the European Union (EU). Differences in politics, economic policy, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs challenge the fabric of a common identity. All of these diversity trends reflect global dynamics of difference. A recent Google search of the term diversity yielded 229,000,000 hits, evidence of its relevance to our everyday experiences. So how can we possibly address diversity of this magnitude in this book?

Our approach is to narrow it down. In this book, we examine diversity primarily with respect to racial and ethnic differences, although gender, religion, ability, and sexual orientation are also important parts of the diversity story. Diversity, and how people respond to it, depends on the history, economics, and politics of a society and the psychology of its members. Although we focus primarily on diversity in the United States, we also present examples from other countries that broaden our understanding of diversity.

Fundamentally, diversity is about differences between and within individuals, institutions, and societies. This book focuses on the **psychology of diversity**—basic psychological processes that are triggered when we encounter people who are different from us in significant and salient ways or experience being treated differently by others

because of their social status. We further explore the dynamics of mental representation and social interaction across individuals, institutions, and cultures and how differential bases of power, privilege, and status affect these interactions. Finally, we identify the effects of diverse contexts on the thoughts, actions, and feelings of people in them.

This book invites you to learn more about what is meant by diversity, our psychological responses to it, what we know about human behavior and diversity, and how it impacts us as people and as a nation. Although diversity often offers opportunities for positive benefits, it is not just any differences that are beneficial. We do not want more felons or bullies among us. But other things equal, we believe that diversity of perspectives, experiences, talents, and backgrounds can enrich most contexts, institutions, and relationships.

However, as we show in later chapters, there is a general human tendency to avoid differences or react negatively to them. Moreover, when we focus on differences, we often fail to appreciate the similarities among us. These biases occur at all social levels: (a) individual attitudes and behavior, (b) institutional policies and programs, and (c) cultural beliefs and practices that often lead to biases in relationships and in institutions. Two of the major challenges of diversity in everyday life are 1) understanding and reducing the many biases that hinder the creation and support of effective diversity in groups, institutions, organizations, and societies, and 2) maximizing the benefits of diversity and to minimizing the difficulties and adverse effects growing diversity can produce.

Beyond Prejudice and Racism

Prejudice and discrimination are significant barriers to beneficial diversity (Jones, 1997). However, as this book's subtitle—*Beyond Racism and Prejudice*—indicates, this book is about much more. Eliminating racism and prejudice, even if it were possible, is not enough. We also consider what can be done to better achieve the positive potential of human diversity. But what does it mean to go *beyond* prejudice and racism?

Beyond has several meanings—something that is further away, after a specified period of time, to a greater extent, or apart from or separate from. It is principally in the last sense of additional or separate from that we use the term beyond. Prejudice and racism are, by all accounts, undesirable and something to "get beyond." To get beyond it, though, you have to take it into account, as Justice Blackmun advised. So, in this book, we take prejudice and racism into account, and describe its negative effects, and some ways to counteract them. But we also consider that diversity is something additional or separate. Diversity is not something to get beyond, but something to seek with a positive motivation. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor argued that diversity was a compelling interest in higher education, and we take that same viewpoint with regard to our society. In its separateness, we consider that diversity produces different challenges and offers significant benefits.

But to realize how to achieve those benefits, we need a different analytical paradigm (Jones & Dovidio, 2018), one that is responsive to the multiplicities of diversity and the various challenges they pose.

Diversity paradigms allow for integration of perspectives and experiences and enable complex and competing possibilities and influences to be integrated into a holistic solution—a *both/and* perspective. Further, diversity paradigms offer the ability to reconcile diverse needs, aspirations, perspectives, and experiences of different people into a working engagement that allows each to contribute to the whole, while maintaining their distinctive individual and social identities.

Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, and Bush (2011) refer to this diversity objective as **full participation**—"an affirmative value focused on creating institutions that enable people, whatever their identity, background, or institutional position, to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and contribute to the flourishing of others" (p. 3). Prejudice and racism are integrally connected to diversity, but they are not the same thing. This book presents broad empirical and theoretical analysis about each and how they intersect.

Perspectives on Diversity

This book acknowledges and represents several important perspectives on diversity. Here are brief accounts of some of the important diversity perspectives.

Behavioral Science of Diversity

Although we draw on work from a range of disciplines, we approach diversity primarily from the perspective of psychology, hence *The Psychology of Diversity*. Psychology emphasizes the central role of *individual* perceptions of, and reactions to, diversity. We consider research from the *microlevel* of neuroscience, which studies the structure and function of the brain and its relation to behavior, and to *macrolevels* of social and political psychology, which examine how our identification with various groups influences how we respond to others. The scope of our perspective is broad. We also consider institutional and cultural influences on diversity. Nevertheless, consistent with our psychological perspective, we discuss how historical events, institutions such as the legal system, and culture affect responses to diversity by shaping the way people think, feel, and act.

We adopt the general framework of diversity science in our analysis of the psychology of diversity (see Plaut, 2010). According to Plaut, a **diversity science** should (a) avoid employing and perpetuating an abstract conception of race; (b) locate the sources of inequality not only in individual minds but also in the practices, policies, and institutions that they create; (c) unearth cultural ideologies that help perpetuate systems of inequality; (d) interrogate the mask of privilege that Whiteness carries; (e) investigate the perspectives of both minority and majority groups in dynamic

interaction; and (f) document the experiences of groups beyond the Black–White binary. In this way, Plaut argues, diversity science will be able to provide descriptions of diversity-related psychological processes.

Diversity Within Diversity

All members of diverse groups are not alike; far from it. Diversity is not sufficiently captured by looking at racial, ethnic, or cultural groups as a whole. Not only is there diversity *between* groups, but there is also substantial diversity *within* groups. Moreover, individuals belong to multiple diversity groups. Think about yourself. You have a gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, way of thinking, and so forth. You belong to multiple groups that, taken together, reflect the diversity of US society. Of course there are even more groups that you may belong to, such as student, team, organization, occupation, neighborhood. So, the concept of diversity gets rather complicated. The fact that each of us belongs to multiple diversity groups complicates any consideration of diversity but must be incorporated into our understanding of it. There is, therefore, diversity "within" and "between" people or groups. We are a diverse society, and within the customary demographic markers, there are even more layers of diversity.

Here are some examples. Asians from Korea are different from those from Japan, who are different from those from China, and a multitude of diversity exists within each of these Asian groups. Southeast Asians from India are different from persons from Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and so on. Whether they are first- or second-generation immigrants to the United States also matters. The so-called "model minority" label, Asian or Asian American, covers a broad spectrum of socioeconomic statuses, languages, cultures, and immigrant statuses (Sue, Sue, Sue & Takeuchi, 1995). Latine people are considered an ethnic group in the US Census, but they may be of any race—Black, White, Asian, Native American—or have ancestry from, for example, Mexico, Central or Latin America, Spain, Puerto Rico, or Cuba. They may live in the southwest, on the west coast, the east coast, or the southeast, each with different challenges and presenting a different cultural context. Like members of all other groups, they vary by sexual orientation.

While we frequently discuss Black–White relations in this book, it is also important to keep in mind the diversity within both of these groups. Black people are young and old, rich and poor, immigrant and native-born. They may live in Black urban environments or Black suburban enclaves or integrated suburban settings. Robinson (2011) describes this diversity as comprising at least four groups: (a) **mainstream**, the middle-class majority with a full ownership stake in American society; (b) **emergent**, persons of mixed-race heritage and communities of recent Black immigrants; (c) **transcendent**, a small elite group with substantial wealth, power, and influence; and (d) **abandoned**, a minority with defeatist dreams and pessimistic hope. According to Robinson, these "four Black Americas are increasingly distinct, separated by demography, geography and psychology … leading separate lives"

(Robinson, 2011, p. 5). Touré (2011) goes further to describe 40 million ways to be Black based on the uniqueness of each and every Black person.

White people, too, are rich and poor, urban and suburban, well-educated and not, gay and straight, and members of many different ethnic groups, such as Italian, Polish, or German. A psychology of diversity includes White people as a diversity group and recognizes diversity within that group. American Indians are from different nations, live in different parts of the United States, and have different traditions and needs. They too vary in socioeconomic status, acculturation, and sexual orientation and physical ability status.

Finally, a large and growing number of people consider themselves to be of mixed race/ethnicity, a group also richly diverse as described for the other groups we mention. By 2050, one in five Americans will describe themselves as multiracial (Lee & Bean, 2012). And we add one further wrinkle: diversity exists not only between and within groups—reflecting ways in which they are different from one another, but also within each individual—reflecting the diversity of experience, identity, and consciousness of each person. So, when we talk about diversity, it is not one thing but many. The challenges our society faces in making a harmonious mixture are enormous. This book cannot "solve" these challenging diversity perspectives and issues. We can, however, share psychological research findings that shed light on the challenges and provide some answers to some of our questions about diversity.

We do not want to leave you with the impression that diversity is only about problems and difficulties. Diversity among us in a variety of settings creates opportunities and often better outcomes. So, the challenges of diversity are not only to lessen the adverse impacts and meet the problems that diversity presents, but to capitalize on the opportunities that multiple perspectives, different experiences and talents, understandings, and even hunches or intuitions can offer.

Diversity, Division, and Discord

The social and political divides that are increasing in countries across the globe typically involve intense rhetoric, escalating conflict, and feelings of moral outrage, which frame situations as right versus wrong, and often good versus evil. The psychology of diversity offers a different and, hopefully, more productive perspective. Often, the psychological processes of people on opposite sides of the divide are not that different. A deeper understanding of the psychology of diversity has the potential to take what often drives us apart and redirect these processes to bring us together—to appreciate what we have in common while respecting our differences. Diversity does not have to divide us; it can make us all stronger.

The power of the psychology of diversity is that it offers important insights into both what motivates people to engage in movements, as well as to participate in countermovements. The psychology of diversity requires understanding both. Several recent theories identify perceptions of injustice as a key driver of **collective action**, which is coordinated action by individuals with a common purpose, to achieve a common objective, typically to address unfair treatment (Agostini & van

Zommeren, 2021). Decisions to engage in collective action depend on belonging to a social group that experiences injustice and/or identifying with that group. The continuing effects of social bias, and minoritizing and marginalizing experiences of groups, can be catalysts for collective action. But there is an important caveat and sobering reality. Collective action may be galvanized on both sides of divisive perspectives or experiences, and collective action by one group can trigger collective reaction by another group, thus escalating conflict and deepening the divide (Thomas & Osborne, 2022).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) may seem, at first glance, to be an admirable goal—helping, including, and providing people opportunities to achieve their potential seems good for them and something that will ultimately benefit all of us. But it is not so simple. Diversity as an idea, structure, and programmatic practice has become embroiled in political arenas. It is clear that there is no widespread agreement that increasing diversity is desirable, and that the means of achieving it are acceptable. Most people agree that it is important to ensure equitable treatment and opportunity across social identity groups. However, diversity has fallen into the political divide. DEI is under attack. Figure 1.1 is a photograph of books taken from the Gender and Diversity Center at New College in Florida, put in a dumpster, and subsequently burned in a landfill.

By 2023, legislatures in three states (Texas, Florida, and Utah) approved bans on DEI efforts in higher education and public offices, and 10 additional states had such bills passed in at least one state legislative chamber (Adams & Chiwaya, 2024). Also, by 2023, 28 states had adopted measures that prohibited teaching Critical Race Theory (Buchholz, 2023).

Figure 1.1. Books on diversity and gender taken from the library at New College in Florida and taken to be burned at a landfill.

Important challenges to diversity include how to: elevate diversity above the divisive political discourse and actions; demonstrate how social bias critically impedes positive diversity outcomes; and how to achieve positive diversity outcomes in institutions, organizations, businesses, and communities and society. This book does not provide a blueprint for how this can be done, but it does offer well-researched evidence that helps guide how we can approach this complex and important issue.

Diversity, Equity, and Equality

We believe in merit, equality of opportunity, and fairness. But accomplishing all of these is challenged by historical patterns of advantage and disadvantage, and ongoing biases. Many of these biases occur without awareness or intention.

Take a moment and think about the social groups with which you identify and their relative position in the US social hierarchy. Do you belong to or identify with groups that have traditionally been disadvantaged? Groups that have been advantaged? Do you believe that you may be advantaged by virtue of not being disadvantaged? In those instances, disadvantage is hidden. People's understanding of advantages and disadvantages is often limited to what is salient. So, calling attention to yourself or your group may be a way to transform disadvantage into advantage.

This book addresses many questions you have probably thought about as you have experienced a variety of diverse settings and situations.

- When people disagree about the value of increasing diversity, what do they disagree about?
- Does diversity mean the same thing to members of underrepresented groups and well-represented groups?
- How can we really be fair to everyone when our society is so diverse?
- Do racism and prejudice remain factors in race relations in the United States, or are we now a post-racial society?
- What kinds of diversity strengthen an organization, institution, or society?
- How do we balance an emphasis on what we have in common with what makes us different?
- Where does individual bias come from? What role does culture play?
- Are the historical disadvantages or advantages for some groups perpetuated today? If so, does it continue? Can anything be done about this?
- Is it fair to consider race or ethnicity or gender in college admissions? Is it fair not to?
- Is it really true that diversity benefits all?

You may have a number of other questions about diversity and more may come as you read this book. We address all of these questions in one form or another, based on the research evidence to date. Try to remember them—write them down, in fact—so that when you finish reading this book, you can determine if your questions have been answered or if you have new questions you would like to have answered.