

Letter from the Editor

Mary Kuchta Foster and Pamela Queen

The case for diversity and inclusion

According to Steven Rogers, Senior Lecturer of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, less than 1 percent, or about 70, of Harvard's 10,000 published teaching cases feature Black business leaders (Milano, 2017). Does this make sense today?

In total, 96 percent of the population in the world's ten largest countries is from Asia, South America, or Africa (United Nations, 2017). In the USA, just over 13 percent of the population is Black/African American, 12 percent of the workforce is Black/African American, and about 10 percent of managers and professionals are Black/African American (BLS, 2018; Toossi and Joyner, 2018; US Census Bureau, 2019). These data indicate that Black protagonists are woefully underrepresented in teaching cases.

Are there other reasons to think that a more diverse assortment of teaching cases might be a valuable resource? The rise of global and multinational organizations, with their workforces scattered across the globe, increases demand for talent that can work and manage effectively across geographic and cultural boundaries. The high speed and low cost of communications, facilitated by the internet, wireless networks and mobile devices, increase the need for skills in interpersonal and cross-cultural interactions and communications. The interdependent global economy, with its highly integrated supply chains, increases the need to coordinate and collaborate across organizational boundaries. Students must learn to function effectively across time, space, organizations and cultures, if they want to succeed in today's global work environment. Teaching cases, featuring diverse people, contexts and perspectives, can help students to learn these skills by immersing them in real situations and giving them an opportunity to learn what it takes to succeed in those situations.

In the 1990s, a prominent view among business leaders was that diversity was good for business; many argued that diversity contributed to better odds of recruiting top talent, improving customer service, more effectively reaching target markets, fostering innovation and creativity, and improving company image (Kochan *et al.*, 2003; Kwak, 2003; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016). In the early 2000s, researchers tried to empirically establish the benefits of diversity for organizations. This research led to a change in thinking about diversity: perhaps we should stop asking if diversity is good or bad. Kwak (2003) pointed out: "[...] diversity has become an inescapable social fact [...] [We must] figure out how to maximize its benefits while minimizing its negative effects" (p. 8). Recent research indicates that diversity alone is not enough to consistently yield positive organizational outcomes (Bourke and Dillon, 2018; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016). Diversity management efforts which promote a climate of inclusion are required to achieve positive organizational outcomes (Bourke and Dillon, 2018; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016). To get the benefits of diversity, employees must feel included and appreciated for their unique characteristics, and comfortable sharing their ideas and their authentic selves (Washington and Patrick, 2018). Managers must create an environment of respect, belonging and psychological safety for organizations to achieve the benefits of diversity: higher financial performance, higher innovation and agility, and better business performance (Bourke and Dillon, 2018; Hunt *et al.*, 2015; Washington and Patrick, 2018). Based on a Deloitte survey of over 10,000 business leaders, two-thirds believe that diversity and inclusion are important or very important to their organization's success (Bersin *et al.*, 2017).

To summarize, today's organizations want to recruit diverse employees, create an inclusive work environment and achieve the positive organizational outcomes associated with having a diverse workforce operating in an inclusive environment. Organizations are looking for diverse students and students who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to work effectively in diverse organizations and to create, lead and manage inclusive environments. Teaching cases which

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feature diverse people in diverse contexts and situations can help students from all types of backgrounds learn how to operate effectively in these types of environments.

Educators have a responsibility to help students see themselves as being capable of meeting workplace challenges and to help them acquire the skills to do so. Well written teaching cases with rich, accurate details about real people and situations are an excellent resource to help educators fulfill these responsibilities. Teaching cases can be used to create mastery experiences – the experience of working hard to achieve success, overcoming obstacles through effort (Ackerman, 2018; Bandura, 1999). Cases provide students with the opportunity to take on the challenges described and, through effort and practice, become skilled at critical thinking and the application and evaluation of relevant concepts. These mastery experiences can lead to improvements in self-efficacy (Ackerman, 2018; Bandura, 1999), which is associated with many personal and professional benefits, for example: better performance, more effective personal adjustment, better coping with stress and better health (Chemers *et al.*, 2001; Richardson *et al.*, 2012; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998).

Teaching cases can also be used to create vicarious experiences – the experience of seeing people like you succeed through sustained effort (Ackerman, 2018; Bandura, 1999). When students see people like themselves in a teaching case, people who have succeeded through sustained effort, it helps them believe they can do the same thing. Vicarious experiences can also lead to improvements in self-efficacy (Ackerman, 2018; Bandura, 1999). Teaching cases which feature minority or underrepresented perspectives are particularly important for minority and underrepresented students because seeing “someone like me” accomplish things they might never have imagined themselves doing can be transformational in terms of self-efficacy and identity (Azmitia *et al.*, 2008; Chemers *et al.*, 2011; Syed *et al.*, 2011). When Black/African American students grapple with the challenges faced by Traci Lynn in “Traci Lynn jewelry: an entrepreneur maximizing shining opportunities” or Don Thompson in “Assessing a golden opportunity: CEO performance at McDonald’s,” they may see that they also have the capability to master comparable activities.

Teaching cases featuring underrepresented perspectives also provide much needed and valuable social models for minority and underrepresented students and can help them develop and integrate their professional and personal identities (Chemers *et al.*, 2011). Through engagement with a case like the Traci Lynn case, a Black female student may realize that she can be a black woman and an entrepreneur. Engagement with this type of case can be a mastery experience and a vicarious experience for her, boosting her self-efficacy and helping integrate her identity in a way that a case featuring a white male protagonist never could.

Teaching cases featuring Blacks/African Americans also help all students, minority and majority–disadvantaged and advantaged, grapple with the legal, ethical, moral, personal and practical implications of racism, discrimination, conscious bias and unconscious bias. Black/African American students face adversity because of racism and discrimination; they may also face adversity because of their beliefs (e.g. religious, cultural, etc.). Teaching cases which show how others like them have effectively dealt with both types of adversity can help Black/African American students learn to do the same. These types of cases can also sensitize majority or advantaged students to the challenges faced by their Black/African American colleagues and help them understand their roles and responsibilities in achieving social justice and inclusion. Another benefit to advantaged students is exposure to others unlike themselves – mere exposure to others increases familiarity and liking (Zajonc, 1968). Majority students who have the opportunity to learn about Blacks/African Americans in meaningful, authentic mastery experiences involving teaching cases will be better prepared to help create and perform effectively in diverse, inclusive, socially just work environments. For example, both Black/African American and advantaged students, who grapple with the situation faced by Marcus Bradley and his colleagues in “Guess who’s coming to deliver? Tough decisions about race in the workplace,” will be better prepared to effectively respond when they encounter racism in the workplace.

In this special issue, you will find six teaching cases featuring Blacks/African Americans in an array of complex business situations (see Table I for details):

- Traci Lynn jewelry: an entrepreneur maximizing shining opportunities.
- Assessing a golden opportunity: CEO performance at McDonald’s.

Table 1 Cases in this issue

Case title and target audience	Authors	Synopsis
<p>“Traci Lynn jewelry: an entrepreneur maximizing shining opportunities” Audience: upper division undergraduates; suitable for courses in entrepreneurial strategy, entrepreneurial marketing, general entrepreneurship emphasizing opportunity identification, opportunity assessment and/or effectuation</p>	Caroline E. Glackin	<p>This case explores the opportunity identification, assessment and decision-making of an energetic, African American, female founder and CEO in the rarely researched direct selling channel. Dr Traci Lynn Burton founded her company at 24 with an investment of \$200. In 2008, in its second incarnation, Traci Lynn Jewelry became a direct selling company and has taken bold steps. By 2018 the company was a direct selling leader and was preparing to launch a new product line. The case supports undergraduate students in understanding effectuation and causation, opportunity identification and assessment, and direct selling</p>
<p>“Assessing a golden opportunity: CEO performance at McDonald’s” Audience: intermediate financial accounting courses for undergraduates, introductory graduate accounting courses or other courses with an element of financial statement analysis</p>	Paquita Y. Davis-Friday and Lee Boyar	<p>This case examines the role of financial accounting in evaluating CEO performance in the context of the appointment of McDonald’s first African-American chief executive and his subsequent two-and-a-half years on the job. The case deepens students’ understanding of the link between financial reporting and stewardship, while highlighting the subjectivity inherent in assessing managerial performance, particularly over relatively short time periods. As students analyze the case, they must consider the extent to which a firm’s results are attributable to luck vs skill. We use “skill” to refer to CEO effort and other controllable factors, while “luck” refers to exogenous factors, such as macroeconomic conditions. Assessing stewardship is of practical significance. It allows pay to be better aligned with performance and empowers stakeholders to identify when a change of leadership may be warranted. The case may also be used to spur reflection, in an applied context, on the importance of being alert to unconscious bias, even when evaluating seemingly objective financial reporting data. Recent research, discussed herein, suggests that business students sometimes exhibit bias when making assessments</p>
<p>“Guess who’s coming to deliver? Tough decisions about race in the workplace” Audience: undergraduate and graduate organizational behavior and human resource management courses</p>	Katina Williams Thompson and Susan Dustin	<p>“Guess who’s coming to deliver” is a case that examines an event that occurred at Lowe’s Home Improvement Warehouse in late July and early August of 2015. A customer who had purchased some products from Lowe’s requested that only White delivery people be dispatched to her home because she did not allow African-American people in her house. The case is factual and was written from information that was publicly available in the media. The case is designed to help instructors facilitate a meaningful classroom discussion about micro aggressions from different stakeholder perspectives</p>
<p>“Building positive relationships in the first 100 days” Audience: upper level leadership or organizational behavior courses; the case can be adopted for graduate courses and executive education depending upon the work experience of the individuals</p>	Shontarius Aikens	<p>Winston Thompson is the new Residential Manager of Drayson Residential Complex at Sybel University. After meeting with staff in his area of responsibility and learning about the complexities of his new position, Winston needs to determine the best way to build positive relationships with each member of the leadership team in his complex. In this case, students are challenged to determine the best relationship building approach for each staff member using concepts from leader-member exchange (LMX) theory while also taking into consideration issues of race, age, and gender</p>
<p>“Green Forever Landscaping and Design, Inc.: how an entrepreneur grew his business” Audience: introductory undergraduate and graduate level courses in entrepreneurship</p>	Minnette Bumpus and Nikita Floyd	<p>Nikita, a 50-year old, African American male, had grown his business from a one-person seasonal landscaping business to a year-round landscaping and design business with full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees and an array of services and customer segments. To his delight, he was able to unite his avocation with his vocation. With over 30 years of experience in</p>

(continued)

Table 1

Case title and target audience	Authors	Synopsis
<p>“Ghacem in Ghana: marketing cement in a newly competitive environment” Audience: undergraduate or graduate introductory marketing courses; or international business courses</p>	<p>Israel Kpekpena and Haiyan Hu</p>	<p>landscaping and landscape design Nikita was always scanning the landscape for new business opportunities that would align with his company’s mission statement and help sustain Green Forever’s core business Ghacem was the first cement manufacturing company in Ghana and had enjoyed a monopoly for almost 33 years. The company offered a homogeneous product to an undifferentiated market from 1967 until competition began in 2000. New competitors promoted the use of cement grade numbers on their product packaging to signal a better value, which intensified the competition. As the Head of Marketing of the company, Benny was asked to develop a marketing strategy for the company’s newly developed product for the company to remain competitive. This case emerges students in the cement market in Ghana and gives them an opportunity to apply marketing concepts in an authentic environment</p>

- Guess who’s coming to deliver? Tough decisions about race in the workplace.
- Building positive relationships in the first 100 days.
- Green Forever Landscaping and Design, Inc.: how an entrepreneur grew his business.
- Ghacem in Ghana: marketing cement in a newly competitive environment.

Thank you to all the authors who responded to this special issue call. Thank you to all the authors who are working on teaching cases in various stages of development which feature Black/African American protagonists. Thank you to all the authors who intend to continue developing cases featuring Blacks/African Americans. Keep up this important work. Do not be discouraged by the effort required to tell these important stories.

Thank you for taking the time to tell the complex, interesting and inspiring stories of Blacks/African Americans in business. Thank you for creating resources that educators can use to help students learn – resources which will help minority and underrepresented students develop the skills, abilities and beliefs to succeed in today’s workplace and resources which will help advantaged and disadvantaged students see racism, discrimination and bias from new perspectives and help them learn to be more effective and fair when they face these challenges.

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