DEI and Belonging: Changing the Narrative and Creating a Culture of Belonging in Nonprofit Organizations

Rakiya F. Witwer

Class 622: Capstone

Spring 2021

Instructor: Dr. Marco Tavanti
INTRODUCTION

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) has become the latest trend in an effort to move the needle forward for many nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are the voice of the community and they play a vital role in making sure they highlight the plight of the community they serve. While nonprofit organizations are caring about the welfare of the community they serve, they must also consider the emotional and psychological wellbeing of their employees by creating an inclusive workplace where they can feel like they belong and show up, and be acknowledged for their uniqueness and contributions to the nonprofit organization. To build a culture of belonging in the workplace nonprofit organizations must expand their inclusive policies to create an environment where all employees can thrive.
OVERVIEW / INTRODUCTION

- **Diversity** is being invited to the party, **Equity** is being served the same food as everyone else, **Inclusion** is being asked to choose the music and being invited to dance and **Belonging** is whether you feel welcome at the party and want to stay till the end.
- Belonging is a feeling that transcends any DEI policy or strategy and just because someone is included in a nonprofit organization it does not mean they feel they belong.
- The goal with this research is to help nonprofit organizations explore how to create that authentic workplace, through intentionally inclusive policies and practices.
OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

1. Identify challenges to implementing DEI&B policies
2. Highlight the impact of a culture of belonging in nonprofit organizations
3. Outline a roadmap for moving beyond DEI and expanding inclusive policies to promote belonging
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) impact belonging in nonprofit organizations (NPOs) workplace culture?

2. How does inclusive practices promote a culture of belonging in nonprofit organizations?

3. How does employee sense of belonging impact their performance in the workplace?
METHODS AND APPROACHES

Literature Review
- Academic Journals
- Books
- Articles
- Reports

Expert Interviews
- 7 Interviews
- 10 Interview questions
- Interview Analysis
LITERATURE REVIEW

DEI AND BELONGING POLICIES
INCLUSIVE PRACTICES
NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE
BELONGING AS A METRIC FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS
EXPERT INTERVIEWS

- Chief Diversity Officer
- Chief Executive Officer
- Senior Director HRBP
- Senior Director Learning
- Employment Specialist
- Program Specialist
- Associate Director
# Data Analysis: Literature Review

## Psychology of Belonging in Relation Nonprofit Organization
- Motivation for belonging and social identity within nonprofit workplaces
- The effects of exclusion in the workplace: Isolation, depression and poor performance

## Examining Inclusion as a Vehicle for Belonging
- Employees must be included in all formal and informal decision-making processes
- Perception of inclusion leads to job satisfaction, task effectiveness and wellbeing

## Understanding Inclusive Leadership Practices
- Nonprofit leaders must create space for dialogue and engagement of employees
- NPOs leaders are in the position to highlight the benefits of a diverse workforce

## Understanding Belonging and Performance
- Employees with strong sense of belonging, report a 56% higher level of job performance
- Employees who feel they belong reported taking 75% fewer sick days
- Belonging is associated with a more than 50% reduction in turnover risk

## Belonging and Emotional Wellbeing
- Supportive workplace environment improves mental health and contributes to lowering anxiety
- Creating workspaces that recognizes the uniqueness and talent of individuals

## Understanding Allyship and Belonging
- Affinity Resource groups and race-based caucuses is critical to promoting a culture of belonging
- Naming white privilege, and considering cultural differences as a strength within the workplace
Emerging Themes

- Predominantly white employees in leadership positions
- Hierarchical leadership structure leading to silos within NPOs
- Infrequency of employee surveys leading to a lack of trust in the leadership
- Grounding DEI training in historical racial context
- ERGs and ARGs are critical to building culture of belonging in NPOs
- Opportunity for advancement and professional development for lower-level staff
- NPOs prioritizing mental health and wellness during the pandemic

"To be a white leader in a community of color, in an organization that is predominantly people of color is somewhat uncomfortable" - CEO

"We run pulse surveys and I often wonder how many people are reading them and feeling like change is being enacted" - KC

"Belonging in nonprofit need to come from the historical context, including 1619 project, Asian, African American and Latin American and indigenous studies" - CDO

"Employee Resource groups are where people can come and share openly and vulnerably about their experiences" - EB
IMPLICATIONS: NPO BELONGING MODEL SHORT-TERM

Model of Belonging

- Embed regular DEI trainings in organization’s culture
- HR- Adopt inclusive hiring practices
- Encourage Transparency
- Eliminate Siloed Thinking

Adopt belonging as metric for success

Implement Employee and Affinity Resource Groups

Promote leadership mentoring and opportunities for advancement

Source: Authors Creations. Adapted from Marslow (1943)
IMPLICATIONS: NPO BELONGING MODEL LONG-TERM

Adapted Model of Belonging

- **Inclusion**: Ideas, perspectives and thoughts of all individuals matter.
- **Diversity**: Represent all identities in an organization.
- **Equity**: Consistently acknowledge and redistribute power.

- **Saturation of homogeneity of culture and simplified points of view**
- **Dominant ideology as the standard for promotion and decision making**
- **Belonging**
  - An organization fully engaging the potential of individuals where innovation thrives, and values and beliefs are integrated.

Source: Author's Creation. Adapted from Krys Burnette, 2019
RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Organization:
• Implement DEIB trainings for C-level to entry-level staff
• Include trainings that focus on historical context of racism
• Implement ERGs and ARGs to promote belonging
• Adopt belonging as a metric for organizational success

HR Policy Change:
• Hire based on skills and experience not education
• Conduct blind review of candidate resumes to reduce bias
• Conduct an annual survey to measure belonging

People Managers
• Conduct regular performance reviews
• Support professional development of direct reports
REFERENCES


SUMMARY

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging has become the latest trend in an effort to move the racial equity agenda forward for many nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are the voice of the community and they play a vital role in making sure they highlight the plight of the community they serve. While nonprofit organizations are caring about the community they serve, they must also consider the emotional and psychological wellbeing of their employees by creating an inclusive workplace where they can feel like they belong and show up and be acknowledged for their uniqueness and contributions to the organization. To build a culture of belonging in the workplace nonprofit organizations must expand their inclusive policies and practices to create an environment where all employees can thrive.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of belonging as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion in the nonprofit organizational context. The research project will focus on identifying barriers that nonprofit organizations face in implementing diversity equity and inclusion policies. The research will also highlight the impact that belonging has on the workplace culture and overall performance of nonprofit organizations and lastly it will outline a roadmap for achieving belonging by expanding inclusive practices in nonprofit organizations.

RESEARCH

1. How does diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) impact belonging in nonprofit organizations?
2. How does inclusive practices promote a culture of belonging in nonprofit organization?
3. How does belonging impact performance in nonprofit organizations?

METHODS

Literature Review
- Academic Journals
- Books
- Articles
- Reports

Expert Interviews
- 7 Interviews
- 10 Interview questions
- Interview Analysis

MODEL FOR BELONGING

For the Nonprofit Organization:
- Implement DEIB trainings for C-level to entry-level staff
- Include trainings that focus on historical context of racism
- Implement ERGs and ARGs to promote belonging
- Adopt belonging as a metric for organizational success

HR Policy Change:
- Hire based on skills and experience not education
- Conclude blind review of candidate resumes to reduce bias
- Conduct an annual survey to measure belonging

People Managers
- Conduct regular performance reviews
- Support professional development of direct reports

REFERENCES

