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A Course in "Work-Force Diversity": Strategies and Issues

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There is growing consensus that American business schools produce graduates whose information and skills are largely irrelevant to the practice of business. Corporate representatives complain that business schools are not responsive to the needs of employers and frequently generate graduates who lack creativity, people skills, cross-cultural knowledge, and the capacity for teamwork (Duetchman, 1991; Clark, 1990; Leavitt, 1989; McLaughlin, 1989). I believe that business schools should concentrate on producing graduates who not only effectively function in today's business world, but who also have vision and skills to improve it. Instead of moving in this direction, however, business education is poised to fall short once more, by paying scant attention to the placement and coverage of work-force diversity within business school curriculums.

Since the Hudson Institute's Workforce 2000 report (Johnston & Packer, 1987), it is widely accepted that women, people of color, and immigrants now constitute the majority of new work force entrants and will continue to represent an increasingly larger portion of the American work force. These demographic trends, coupled with the aging of the population and the recent passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, will produce a dramatically more diversified work force and present new opportunities and challenges for American managers (Allen, 1991; Broadnax, 1992; Belfry & Schmidt, 1989; Cox & Blake, 1991; Gerber, 1990; Jerich, Copeland, Boyles, & Jones, 1989; Mezoff & Johns, 1989; Rosen & Lovelace, 1991; Wagel & Levine, 1990; Wagner, 1991).

There are indications that diversity has already become a major issue for American corporations, and that many are well ahead of business schools in their concern for and coverage of diversity (Betters-Reed & Moore, 1989).

A national survey of 645 companies by Towers/Perrin indicated that 78% were concerned about diversity and 29% had developed a plan for managing diversity (Galagan, 1991). A host of companies, including Quaker Oats, Avon, Procter & Gamble, Du Pont, US West, Corning, Xerox, McDonalds, Digital Equipment, AT&T, and PepsiCo have initiated their own diversity education to provide their employees with skills necessary to effectively manage and work with people of different backgrounds and demographic characteristics (Edwards, LaPorte, & Livingston, 1991; Haight, 1990; Overman, 1991; Solomon, 1989, 1990).

As a reflection of these developments, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) noted that employee and customer demographic diversity now represents one of the major challenges for organizations and managers, and expanded their accreditation standards (1991) to mandate the coverage of work-force diversity in all undergraduate and graduate business curriculums.

Despite this mandate, I see little evidence that universities are addressing the issue of intra-work-force diversity in a systematic manner. This article is an attempt to encourage a dialogue about the teaching of diversity by exploring possible ways of integrating coverage of diversity into a business curriculum. It also describes strategy implementation by recounting the decision of a medium-sized, midwestern state university to develop a management course dealing specifically with diversity in the work force. The course objectives, content, and format are described; problems and reactions encountered are detailed.

Strategies for Including Diversity

There are two general approaches to incorporate the study of diversity into a business curriculum. The first option is an infusion approach, where diversity is covered in a number of required business core classes. The second option is to address the topic via an individual course in work-place diversity. Business schools have faced this choice of how to incorporate a topic into the curriculum several times before when the AACSB required that international and ethical perspectives be included in curriculums. As in the past, the AACSB made it clear that it was not mandating either one of these approaches; the choice was left to each individual school.

The infusion approach has advantages and disadvantages. Done correctly and thoroughly, it would ensure that students are exposed to the material a number of times in a variety of contexts. Such an approach might best represent a true reflection of what workplace diversity is—a factor that is

present in every occupation, every organization, and every function of business. The infusion strategy conceptualizes diversity as one of a number of factors present in the business environment, a more natural and realistic approach than making diversity a spotlighted issue. The infusion method also offers the possibility of involving a number of faculty in the teaching of diversity.

The infusion method also has drawbacks. Faculty often perceive the infusion of a new topic into current courses as daunting, time consuming, and unrewarding (Mendenhall, 1989). Not all faculty are knowledgeable, concerned with, or committed to the study and teaching of diversity. Many equate infusing diversity into a curriculum with acknowledging the contributions of diverse people to the field currently under study. Using an infusion strategy, therefore, presents the danger that the subject matter will be treated superficially and be reduced, as one of my colleagues remarked, to a list of "heroes and holidays." In addition, interweaving any topic through a variety of courses necessitates an administrative monitoring effort to ensure that the material is covered in all the expected places. Despite monitoring, it is inevitable that coverage and attention will differ across instructors; students will therefore experience varying degrees of exposure to the material.

In a similar way, developing a course that specifically addresses the topic of diversity in the work force has advantages and disadvantages. Such a specialized course may create the danger that faculty will feel that there is no need to consider diversity in other courses or contexts. A specialized course may function to marginalize or devalue the topic, encouraging the view that diversity is not a mainstream issue that needs to be discussed in a variety of contexts. Additionally, there are curriculum considerations involved with a diversity course. If the course is the only place diversity is covered and if the AACSB requirements are to be met, then the course must become a requirement. This could be a problem for many business schools, whose curriculums are already overloaded.

All of these are familiar concerns to business faculty and administrators who have had to decide how ethics and international issues should be covered. Instituting a diversity course may result however, in a unique dilemma for business schools. Bell (1989) claims that the inclusion of diversity in business education generates political, theoretical, and pedagogical obstacles. Given the debate raging about multicultural education, there is a strong possibility that a diversity course will encounter resistance and will make a program vulnerable to charges of "political correctness." I found this to be true as I submitted our workplace diversity course to committees in the curriculum approval process. Some committee members argued that the course inappro-

priately attempted to teach "values." Others claimed that this particular subject matter was no more important than other business issues and, there-fore, did not warrant a specific course. Some held that other dis- ciplines could better cover this material and wanted to postpone the proposal until a debate about requiring a general education course in multiculturism had been decided.

Initially irritated by these roadblocks, I listened and responded to them, ultimately resulting in a stronger proposal. We eventually secured approval for the course. We justified the need for the course by using the Hudson Institute figures. Course objectives were written to reflect an evenhanded exploration of diversity, emphasizing the opportunities and obstacles that work-force diversity presents. It was also necessary to stress to our opponents that although there would inevitably be a strong multicultural theme through-out the course, its primary purpose would be the teaching of management and organizational behavior skills. Finally, we changed the course status from a requirement for all management majors to an elective, an unfortunate but necessary compromise. Because the course has elective status, diversity is theoretically being covered in other core classes, but I question if this is done in any consistent manner.

I persisted with the proposal because I believe there are several justifica-tions for an independent course about work-force diversity. The strongest argument for treating the topic separately is my conviction that diversity is not merely an interesting fact to be noted; work-force diversity is a phenome-non that necessitates the learning of new organizational behavior and man-agement skills that are too extensive and important to be covered piecemeal in other courses. Going even further, I contend that learning to effectively manage a diversified work force involves *unlearning*, or at least questioning, much of what standard management courses advocate. Many management texts and theories tend to present the notion of subordinates or employees as a homogeneous blob to which various management techniques can be applied and from which uniform reactions can be expected. Learning to manage the modern work force involves realizing that employees are different along a number of dimensions and often will not exhibit the same attitudes and behaviors or respond to the same stimuli. Although OB texts often include coverage of "individual differences," I have noticed the number of chapters devoted to the individual is decreasing whereas the number of chapters devoted to macro considerations is increasing.

Intensive and exclusive consideration of diversity also acknowledges that a pronounced emotionalism surrounds the issue and can be expected to emerge (Betters-Reed & Moore, 1989; Kirkham, 1989). A class on diversity

gives students the opportunity to express and discuss those emotions. In addition, treating the topic in a specific course recognizes that many faculty members have neither the desire nor the knowledge to fully integrate the study of workplace diversity into other courses. Finally, my personal commitment to this course is based on my conviction that although business school graduates may be more technically and analytically proficient, they are becoming increasingly less compassionate and tolerant.

After reflecting on all the above, my university decided to add a course titled "The Diversified Work Force: A Management Perspective" to our undergraduate business curriculum. One or two sections is offered each term, with enrollment limited to 30. The course fills and demand has remained steady since 1991.

Characteristics of Registrants

My university has a fairly homogeneous student body and tends to draw students from small towns and middle-class suburbs. University demographic profiles for 1992 depict a student body that is 59% female and 41% male; 90% White, 5% Black, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Native American. Student age ranges from 17 to 67, with 65% in the 17-24 category. Disability is self-reported at 1%.

Many who enroll in our business school have little lifetime exposure to people who are different from themselves. Some White and male students come to the course with a naiveté about the extent to which problems exist and change is needed; the course content needs to be structured to dispel these fallacies relatively quickly. Other students enter with an acute awareness of their own lack of understanding and knowledge. Because the course is an elective, however, most enroll with a relatively open mind and a genuine desire to investigate. Many sign up on the recommendation of a friend who has taken the class. Curiously enough, most do not initially perceive the course as threatening, although that perception changes as the semester progresses.

The demographics of the various class sections that I have taught vary slightly but closely mirror other management courses. I do not see certain groups of students avoiding the class but I believe the university's homogeneity is reflected in class makeup. Males and females are usually equally represented. Students of color have ranged from 1% to 25% of the class. Variability in age is largely dependent on what time the class is offered. Although I know there have been students with disabilities and differing sexual orientations, they have not chosen to talk about them. My experience

has shown that as student diversity increases, the class is more willing to get confrontational. I have also not surprisingly noticed that if a particular group has only one representative, that person tends to remain fairly quiet. Although diverse sections are more difficult to manage, they also represent the greatest potential for learning. They force people to become acquainted, and to exchange views, with others they might never know. I have tried to increase the diversity within the class by asking the dean of the multicultural center to encourage students to enroll in the class.

Definition of Diversity

My first decision was which dimensions of diversity to include. Loden and Rosener (1991; 18-20) differentiate between primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. A primary dimension is defined as one that is *immutable or inborn,* and exerts a "profound and constant impact" throughout a person's life. The authors identified age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical abilities/qualities, and sexual orientation as the primary dimensions. A secondary dimension of diversity is a *mutable difference* which can be acquired, discarded, or modified; its absence or presence does not change the "fundamental core identity." Included in this category are education, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religion, and work experience.

Given their permanence and importance, I initially decided to include the primary dimensions, with the exception of sexual orientation. I excluded sexual orientation because I felt that lesbian and gay students might be unwilling to openly discuss their sexual orientation. I also felt that it might be more difficult to get guest speakers in this area. My choices and assumptions went unchallenged for two semesters until a student asked why I did not cover sexual orientation. I recited my reasons and she looked at me skeptically. Upon reflection, I had to admit that my reasons were weak. Guest speakers could surely be found. And I do not always have students of other races or students who are disabled in every class, but I still cover those groups each time. It was personal discomfort that had prompted me to exclude sexual orientation. Unlike the other primary dimensions, sexual orientation involves perceptions of morality. Although I am not uncomfortable with differing sexual orientations, I am uncomfortable with what I perceive to be judgmental attitudes based on rigid religious doctrine. Therefore, I had allowed my own comfort to dictate my choice of diversity dimensions. I now include sexual orientation and cover all the primary diversity dimensions. I should also note that the secondary dimensions are often related to the primary dimensions and frequently come up and are included in discussion.

The choice of dimensions has an impact on the degree of emotion that surfaces in the class. I have found that students are most receptive to learning about the disabled and express the most positive attitudes toward this group at the end of the class. Conversely, they are the most uncomfortable with and critical toward those of differing sexual orientation. Race and ethnicity also produce discomfort and angst, but this tends to surface in the form of denial, resentment, and guilt. Gender issues result in less discomfort but increased frustration, some of it good-natured, as each contingent tries to make the other understand. Age and generational diversity produce an interested, but relatively neutral, reaction.

Course Objectives

Goals for courses that cover diversity issues may be grouped into three general categories: cognitive, affective, and skill development (Kellogg & Moore, 1985). A work-force diversity course cannot be taught at strictly the cognitive level; the content inevitably generates affect. If the primary goal is increased awareness and understanding, it is possible to teach the course at only the cognitive and affective levels. If one of the goals of the course, however, is to help students become better co-workers and managers, then skill development must also be included.

It was my desire that the course would tap all three learning domains; consequently, I developed the following six course objectives:

1. To become familiar with the demographics of the present and future American work force.
2. To examine the present and historical opportunities/obstacles that workplace diversity presents.
3. To examine our own position toward and beliefs about those who are different from us.
4. To understand the cultures, experiences, and concerns of diverse work-force groups.
5. To develop and practice human relations skills that will help promote understanding and positive interactions between different groups in the work force.
6. To investigate the corporate strategies and programs that can help create a multicultural organization.

Course Topics and Pedagogy

The course is divided into three parts. Although the three sections and their general topics have remained constant, each section still undergoes change and refinement as I attempt to improve the class.

The first section of the course is titled "The Dynamics of Diversity," and is sequenced as follows:

Introduction. The course opens with the *Barnga* tournament card game (Thiagarajan & Steinwachs, 1990), in which tables of participants unknowingly receive different sets of playing rules and must attempt to engage in an orderly card tournament without speaking. This is followed by a discussion of what is personally experienced and what outcomes are produced when people with different perspectives and experiences interact. Students find this game to be fun and it sets the context for the class.

The demographics of the present and future workforce. I next cover changing demographics and ask students what effect this will have on American corporations. I do this to convince students of the legitimacy and importance of workplace diversity. Because it is information oriented, this helps begin the course in a relatively nonthreatening manner.

The dimensions of diversity. I detail the primary and secondary dimensions, and we discuss which ones are most likely to have an impact on a person's experience in the United States. This familiarizes the class with the groups we will study and starts them thinking about their own identity.

As an icebreaker, I hang up an unlabeled world map and ask them to pinpoint the geographical locations of their own ancestors and those of the different races represented in the United States. We usually come to the conclusion that most of us could not pass a sixth grade geography test.

Culture: its meaning, manifestations, and consequences. My major goal here is to help students understand what culture is and to get them to realize how their individual cultures dictate their values, attitudes, and behavior. From there, it is a natural leap to culture shock and ethnocentrism. I lead a game in which cultural differences and power relationships are demonstrated by eliminating the meaning of words and having that fact known to only some participants.

Stereotyping and prejudice. We begin this section by having students privately list familiar stereotypes for 12 different groups. These are later recorded on flip-chart paper and posted (Loden & Rosener, 1991). As students come into the room and take their seats, there is initially laughter followed by a tense silence. I ask them what it would feel like to be the target of these beliefs and to be continually judged by people who think this way.

We examine the stereotypes for their validity by having student representatives from each group compare themselves to the stereotypes. This all leads into a discussion of stereotyping, power, and discrimination. I supplement the discussion with an investigative report titled "True Colors," done by the television show, *Prime Time*, in 1991. Journalists used hidden cameras to follow two comparable men, one White and one Black, for two weeks in St. Louis, Missouri, and recorded the different treatment each received. This video silences all beliefs that discrimination no longer exists. At this point, I usually see the first sign of defensive reaction from the White males in the class; they seem quite uncomfortable with the notion that the prejudices of those in power might matter more than those of other people.

The minority experience in corporate America. This module examines the concepts of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and the glass ceiling. There is usually reluctance on the part of students to concede that true equal opportunity does not exist; indeed some insist that, because of affirmative action, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and women have workplace advantages. I handle this by asking students to describe how their lives have been different from some of the characters in the book *Small Victories*. I encourage a frank discussion about the pros and cons of affirmative action; I think it is important to acknowledge that affirmative action may result in unfairness per the dominant group. But I also prod them to examine the ideology of affirmative action by asking White students if they would like to be Black so that they could take advantage of this perceived favoritism. Dead silence is usually the response.

The second part of the course is titled " 'The Experience of the 'Other.' " It specifically covers:

1. Racial diversity (Asian, Hispanic, African, Caucasian)
2. Gender
3. Age (generational diversity, the older worker)
4. Sexual orientation
5. Disability

Each of the groups is covered separately and receives the same amount of class time. The purposes of this section are to provide students with historical and cultural information about diverse groups, to build empathy between different groups, and to require students to interact with different groups of people. Although I present all of the lecture information in this section, I rely heavily on guest speakers, one from each group, to convey their specific experiences in the American work force. Because we cover Caucasian

Americans, I have asked several informed and thoughtful White men to address the class about the White male perspective, but all have adamantly refused. I talk about this refusal with the class and we discuss how the emphasis on diversity has affected the dominant group.

Lecture material for each group includes population demographics, workforce participation, and current concerns and issues. Guest speakers discuss their backgrounds, cultural differences, experiences, and concerns. Guest speakers are careful to emphasize that they speak only for themselves. I have noticed an interesting phenomenon about guest speakers. If a guest speaker is pleasant and upbeat, the students react positively toward him or her and the group he or she represents. If a guest speaker is perceived as negative or angry, the reactions are less positive. I believe this once again reflects peoples' discomfort with the realities of prejudice and discrimination. Once the guest lectures are completed, we talk about the social phenomenon of being willing to accept "good diverse people."

A common criticism of diversity programs is that although they promote understanding and awareness, they do not teach skills for managing diversity (Galagan, 1991). The third section of the course, "Corporate Diversity Skills and Programs," was designed to fill that gap. I concentrate more on skill development than on corporate diversity programs because most undergraduates will be looking for entry diversity level positions and will not be in policy-making positions. This section gives students a chance to develop and practice the skills necessary to effectively manage and interact with diverse groups of people and it concludes by examining institutional and structural issues; that is, what types of philosophies, practices, and programs would make an organization hospitable to diverse groups of people. Case studies, discussion, and role playing are the major learning vehicles for this part of the class. Specific topics include:

Organizational approaches to diversity. I present students with a variety of organizational approaches to diversity (valuing, managing, containing, coping with, mandating, and tolerating diversity) and I ask them to hypothesize about the assumptions underlying each and the likely consequences.

Communication and performance. This section covers labeling and choice of words. There is generally a spirited debate about the need for gender-neutral language. The goals here are to help students see how some language unintentionally excludes or diminishes people and to think about the consequences of that. Students often bring me memos, letters, signs, and advertisements that disenfranchise groups of people. I have a collection and frequently show and discuss them in class.

We also examine communication style and the tendency to confuse style with performance. Students complete an instrument to explore their own communication style and discuss the attributions they attach to styles that differ from their own.

Group dynamics. I use a role-play (Hai, 1986) to help students see the ways in which people are treated differently in group situations. A group of three males and two females is formed to discuss a problem. Unknown to the men, the women are instructed to assume the communication patterns of men. One of two things happen: either the women are unable to do it, or they are successful, and the men respond by withdrawing or becoming aggressive.

I also use a video tape of a *Murphy Brown* program, where co-workers act overly nice and tiptoe around a newly hired Black executive. It is important to help students understand that motive alone does not determine whether an action is racist, sexist, ageist, and so on; many actions carry unintended messages and consequences (Kirkham, 1989).

Leadership and conflict. This section covers the skills a leader needs to effectively manage a diverse group of people. I use a series of short cases that require students to first diagnose and then formulate a plan for handling the situation. One of the skills I stress is the ability to consider alternate explanations for behavior rather than interpreting a situation only from one's own perspective.

Corporate polices and practices. In addition to examining what leading-edge organizations are doing and what is possible, students also do an analysis of the university by identifying organizational barriers to diversity and suggesting means of correction. They follow this up by writing a letter to the president stating their concerns; some choose to send the letter, whereas others do not. I finish the class by bringing in a guest speaker from a large local corporation, who describes what her company does to promote and manage diversity.

Assignments

The first major assignment is a written cultural self-analysis. This helps students identify their own culture and become aware of the extent to which that culture influences their thoughts, judgments, and behaviors. I also ask them to identify groups to which they have a hard time relating. It has been my experience that many find this a difficult task. Culture is so ingrained that

people often cannot identify it. I provide an outline of the primary manifes-tations of culture and require that, prior to the assignment, students write down every thought, behavior, and feeling that is influenced by culture for at least two hours. Rewriting is, nevertheless, often necessary.

The second assignment involves "experiencing otherness." Students are required to place themselves in a situation in which they would be a visible minority for at least 1 hour (Hai, 1986); each person writes about the experi-ence and shares his or her emotional, intellectual, and physiological reactions with the class. All admit to some anxiety, and some play it safe by finding the least threatening situation. Others, however, force themselves to come into contact with the group toward whom they feel the most fear and dis-comfort. I believe this is the most powerful learning experience of the class.

The final assignment is designed to generate personal contact with a diverse group of people. Each student is required to choose one group of which he or she is not a member and interview at least four representatives of that group; the objective is to discover and document how each interviewee had experienced being a member of a particular group in the American work force. Each student must also generate a list of privileges he or she experi-ences relative to the group interviewed. The students write a major paper describing their results. All who interviewed a specific group of people lead the class in a discussion about their findings.

There are three take-home essay tests. The first two include questions of fact, questions that require self-examination, and questions that encourage speculation. The final exam is a comprehensive case study. I allow students to work on their own or in groups of up to four people. I actually encourage the use of groups. The tests, plus the assignments, result in a heavy writing load.

Problems

Most of the problems encountered when talking about diversity involve emotions that surface in the form of guilt, resentment, denial, and reticence. I also think some of these reactions become more salient in this class because a White female teaches it.

Feelings of resentment from the White male students are not unusual. Although the historical and current relative dominance of White males is examined, I do take care to avoid a critical or disparaging attitude. I try to make sure the course content does not become negative or tangential. The focuses of the course remain on understanding and valuing differences and on making diversity work. Although an examination of the negative conse-quences of diversity, including discrimination and prejudice, is a necessary

component of the course, the class does not focus solely on those topics. I stress that most people have difficulty relating to those who are different and that diversity management requires skills at which many people, regardless of identity or position, are not particularly adept.

Nevertheless, I seem to have two or three males each semester who interpret the course as one which blames the White male for hindering all others in the work force and see the class as an exercise in White male bashing. Some write that they resent being made to feel guilty when they have done no wrong. Sometimes students blame me for their feelings of discomfort and anger. A few have asserted that I obviously do not like White men. One semester, for example, two students wrote that they were absolutely convinced that I favored the females in the class and that I gave them better grades. I was astonished. I use a blind grading process and the students know it. I wondered, however, if I had some biases of which I was unaware. I did some calculations and found that the men actually had a higher average final grade than the women. All of this becomes material for subsequent classes. We now talk about White guilt and discuss how prejudices can serve as a defense mechanism.

A related problem is denial. Rather than allow themselves to feel guilt or acknowledge that things need changing, a few students will deny that any problems exist. I imagine this reaction would be more common if the course were a requirement instead of an elective. As discussed, the "True Colors" video makes it hard to deny racial discrimination. In addition, the guest speakers and the interview reports help. Common themes emerge very quickly from the speakers and the interviewees; it is difficult to hang onto the position that there are no problems when person after person reports the opposite.

I have also encountered problems getting people to open up. Whether the nondominant group will talk is usually a function of numbers. If there are only one or two, not surprisingly, they usually choose not to call attention to themselves. But, contrary to what might be expected, it is often the White males who have the most trouble being open. They are afraid of being labeled prejudiced. Ironically, the exception to this is the very prejudiced student, who usually has no trouble constantly expressing opinions. I have yet to come up with a solution to the first situation; I do not want to force a student to talk, especially when that student feels that he or she is being cast in the role of spokesperson. The second situation also presents difficulties because I am not always aware when majority students are holding back. I try to create an open atmosphere by candidly discussing my own feelings, progress, and failures in this area. This is difficult for me because I am not usually inclined

to share personal information with students. Another solution might be to require ongoing journal entries to help make an instructor aware of things class members are feeling but not expressing.

The emotions I have described get played out in a variety of ways. Most of the time, disagreement is expressed through animated, productive discussion. However, there have been instances when students have insulted each other and one occasion when a student walked out of class with a display of disgust. All involved in these incidents came to talk with me about what happened, and some were willing to discuss their actions and feelings in subsequent classes. When I started teaching this class, it used to upset me that the class members were getting upset. I have since concluded that I do not know how to teach this course without perturbing someone; I am not even sure it is a good idea to try.

Role of the Instructor

I have found that my role in this class is different than in my other classes. In many ways, I consider myself only the most advanced student in the class. The class members and the guest speakers have things to teach me. My views are not those of all women. I am not disabled, older, or homosexual. I will never experience being a person of color. I do not have firsthand knowledge of the experiences and feelings of being a White male in today's work force. Although I initially considered myself a relatively unprejudiced person, I have noticed that my views and reactions have become more open and flexible since I started teaching this class. In many ways, I have learned much in the class.

My general approach is, therefore, to be a facilitator rather than an instructor in the traditional sense of the word. I set a "tone of open exploration, rather than didactic prescriptive approaches to the course content" (Kellogg & Moore, 1985, 42). I believe the traditional instructor role prompts students to believe that a definite perspective is endorsed, that there is a right answer, and that certain responses are expected. Students who disagree with the instructor become silent in fear of jeopardizing their grades. To adopt a facilitating role, I arrange the room in a circle format, use questions, ask that students address the class with the results of assignments, emphasize discussion, use a blind grading system, encourage students to address their comments to each other rather than just to me, and defer questions to the guest speakers.

I also made a conscious decision that I would not speak about the woman's perspective or present myself as a spokesperson for women. When we were

discussing who should teach the class, the common assumption was that a woman or a person of color was needed if the class was going to have credibility. I have found that such a strategy has an unintended consequence: students who are uncomfortable with the class content can more easily dismiss it because they label the instructor as someone with a chip on his/her shoulder, an ax to grind, or a point to prove. One of my colleagues has suggested that perhaps it is a White male who can best reach other White males. It is my untested belief that a team-teaching approach would be best.

Resources Available

One problem involved with teaching a work-force diversity course became immediately apparent: lack of materials available for such a course. A number of popular press tradebooks on managing workplace diversity have been published, but all seem superficial and too one-sided to be used as the sole text. I originally chose *Workforce America* by Loden and Rosener, supplemented with readings and ethnographies. I later added *Small Victories* by Freedman, which tracks the life of a New York inner-city high school teacher for 1 year. It contains rich descriptions and histories of students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. My course materials still change each semester as I discover pieces that might work better.

My university also purchased the *Bridges* (Goldstein & Leopold, 1989) video case series on managing diversity by BNA Communications, Inc. The tapes present situations from a manager's perspective and, although the university has used them successfully to train employees, the undergraduates in my classes have not responded well to them. Perhaps they do not have enough management experience to understand the dynamics. An additional problem is that class lengths are too short to adequately complete the accompanying cases. I was not able to find good published cases on diversity; I have now begun to use a series of cases and vignettes that I wrote myself.

Reaction and Evaluation

Despite the problems described above, student reactions and written evaluations have been positive. About 75% of those who have taken the class give it the highest possible rating and frequently comment that they believe the course should become a requirement. Students get extremely involved with the ideas and material. They frequently bring in newspaper clippings, recount conversations about diversity, and describe incidents they have

witnessed that had previously gone unnoticed. Students who have graduated sometimes mail me articles they think might be useful.

The business school here circulates a quarterly newsletter. Last semester, a group of students brought in the newsletter and pointed out that in one article the male deans were referred to by their titles, whereas the female dean was referred to by her name only. They asked if I had noticed. I had not, but I was impressed that they had.

In addition, students often report a deeper awareness of their own thought processes, perspectives, and behaviors. Although this course focuses on the workplace, the workplace mirrors society. A frequent comment is that the lessons learned in class "have spilled over into my personal life."

Conclusion

Learning to manage a diverse work force is "more difficult than proceeding as though everyone were the same or as though everyone could be the same" (Broadnax, 1992, 13). If business schools want to graduate people prepared to function in an increasingly heterogeneous workplace, we must modify our curriculums to reflect new workplace realities.

I see a specific course on diversity as an excellent way to expose students to the study of work-force diversity and to help them develop the skills necessary to function in the changing work force. It is widely believed that diversity awareness and skills are necessary for American firms to remain healthy and competitive (Belfry & Schmidt, 1989). Hopefully, such education will also provide future business leaders with the means to affect significant positive changes in the working lives of those they manage.

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