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Sensitivity to Diversity in the Workplace

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SENSITIVITY TO DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

By

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Graduate Thesis Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communication and Training
With a Major in Communication Studies

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s, the construct of diversity training has been diligently examined as it relates to managing a diverse workforce. Employers have been faced with the daunting task of figuring out how groups of dissimilar people can work collaboratively in the workplace without incident. Differences have to be addressed in the arena of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, and religious views without prejudice, so that we can form more cohesive workgroups in the labor force. In an effort to deconstruct negative attitudes and ideals towards differences, we must explore, with employees, differences that may cause friction in the workplace. In order to create a more informed and politically correct worker we must give that worker the necessary tools to understand their environments. This is where diversity training will play a major role in helping employees learn about each other in a setting that is safe and free of judgments.

Introduction

Diversity appears to have become a top priority in the hiring process within recent years. Creating a company profile that depicts racial, gender, and sexual orientation diversity is paramount in attracting new hires in today's job market. However, understanding diversity is still a bit elusive for employers; it seems that their reach has far exceeded their grasp on this issue. As we move towards a more diverse workplace, it is of extreme importance that we create work environments that are both politically sensitive and emotionally inviting. As newer generations enter the workforce, they are looking for employers who are sensitive to the needs of the employee as a whole, rather than just the business aspect of the new employee's life.

As employers are finding out, attracting minorities and women may be a full-time company effort. Such programs as diversity training have been incorporated into management strategies to train management and staff on sensitivity regarding workplace issues. However, as the workplace environment becomes more diverse and socially complex, new diversity programs must be implemented to incorporate training in areas outside of gender and race, to include issues such as sexual orientation, age, and religious views. The changing needs of the workplace environments are complex and vast at best. If companies do not promote diversity awareness into the corporate culture of their businesses, they may find themselves at a very distinct disadvantage as compared to their competitors.

As I proceed with this examination of the term diversity, my wish is to arrive at a clearer understanding of the definition of diversity as it pertains to the workplace environment. Diversity has subcategories that must be examined individually, so that we may come to a better understanding of the issue as a whole. This literature review intent is to offer insight into

discriminatory practices that may discourage diversity in the workplace, and diversity management practices that influence diversity awareness in the workplace.

Discriminatory Practices: Diversity Training Needed

According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), "...it is illegal to discriminate in any aspect of employment...", and employers are required by law to post notices to employees advising them of their rights (EEOC, 2009). Such laws and notices are necessary given the historical ramifications of discrimination in the workplace. The fact that we have to inform employers that discriminatory practices are unacceptable in the workplace is suspect and clearly indicates that such inappropriate practices are still engaged in today. For this very reason, companies are incorporating diversity training into employee training programs, in high hopes of avoiding litigation issues with clients or employees.

However, diversity training programs are not simply being incorporated to avoid lawsuits; employers are legitimately becoming more interested and vested in employee's happiness and comfort in the workplace. Employers cannot reasonably assume that people of different races, sexual orientations, and religious beliefs will get along in the workplace smoothly and without incident without some sort of training to do so. In fact, employers need to pay attention to warning signs that may indicate that diversity training is needed.

Warning signs that employees may benefit from diversity training may be things such as but not limited to unprofessional behavior or speech. Usually companies have a hard time identifying problematic employees until after a complaint is made by either a fellow employee or a client. In rare instances, supervisors may witness first hand inappropriate speech or behavior, or fall victim to such actions themselves. However such actions are spotlighted, diversity training can benefit companies by avoiding litigation, bad feelings, and inappropriate behavior,

paralleled with increased employee job satisfaction, more effective customer service, and an increased understanding by employees of employers' expectation.

Racial & Ethnic Diversity

Perhaps the most recognizable diversity issue is that of racial and ethnic equality or rather inequality. With the conclusion of the civil rights movement in America in the 1960s, and Affirmative Action laws that followed in order to achieve social justice, most Americans became sensitive if not concerned about the plights of minorities in this country. Nevertheless, understanding and tolerance did not naturally follow; in fact, ignorance has been perpetuated and amplified by unequal treatment and marked prejudice in the workplace. Laws are still in effect today that help to prevent such workplace discrimination, however often times racial or ethnic prejudices are carried out under the radar of the law. This is when diversity training programs are needed, which are aimed at increasing tolerance, awareness, and decreasing ignorance.

The United States does much to contribute to our classification of races and ethnicities. Most Americans will be subjected to racial categorization long before ever graduating elementary school. As young children sit down to take standardized tests in their schools each year, they will be faced with the daunting task of placing themselves in one of the seven predetermined races by the U.S. Census Bureau. Those categories are as follows: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Some other race, and lastly two or more races. This is evidence that Americans are groomed from an early age to distinguish themselves from other groups creating the 'us versus them' attitude. As we become older and apply for college or a job we are yet again asked personal question in regards to our origin and background, which further categorizes us.

However, ask for the definition of race or ethnicity from any individual and see them instantly become stumped. Defining such complex terms as race or ethnicity does not come easy, even to the researcher. One significant finding that keeps repeating itself in research reviewed is that race and ethnicity are not necessarily interchangeable terms. Racial groups are more clearly defined as groups that share physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture, and other hereditary traits (Lemonik, 2009; Casteel, 2009; Cokley, 2007). Ethnic groups on the other hand are often defined as groups that share common experiences or traditions, history, or culture (Lemonik, 2009; Casteel, 2009; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Cokley, 2007). Even though researchers try to categorize race and ethnicity as two different things, researchers such as Helm (2007) still question, whether racial identity and ethnic identity scales measure the same constructs. However, Cokley (2007) reminds us that, "Ethnicity and race are both socially constructed concepts whose definitions and meaning have changed over time" (p. 224).

Racial and ethnic constructs seem to be one of the most important constructs of an individual's personality. Even though the importance of these constructs will vary from person to person, it seems to be a common theme in most peoples' lives. Women being more in tune with their emotions and feelings may regard ethnic and racial identity as being more important personally than men. Therefore, women in general may be offended more frequently if others don't regard their ethnic and racial identity with the same level of respect as they do. Regardless if you are a man or woman, or if you are dealing with a man or woman, racial and ethnic centrality is important, important enough to be recognized and respected.

Racial and ethnic centrality is defined as the level of importance race and ethnicity has on an individual's identity as a whole (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010). Apparently, racial and ethnic centrality is paramount to the definition of our identity as we continuously seek out ways

in which to define and understand it. Unfortunately, along the way we create stereotypes, which lead to misconceptions about racial or ethnic groups in general that usually aren't true. Racial identity has been linked to racism and prejudice (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010; Helms, 2007) simply because of the negative connotations attached to such things as the construct of race and ethnicity. Conversely, ethnic identity has been defined as a connection one has with their heritage, values, traditions, and language (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010; Phinney & Ong, 2007), which seems to be a much more positive correlation to racial and ethnic centrality as opposed to racial identity.

Now that the importance of racial and ethnic identity has been established to an individual's self-definition, we can begin to understand how sensitive this issue is to a person. When trying to engage a person of a different ethnic or racial background from oneself, we must take into account our differences; yet refrain from making light of them. Interaction with others is a delicate balancing act that requires practice, patience, and a simple desire to be respectful of others. Racial and ethnic diversity is abundant in our lives and we must be able to face diversity issues such as these head on. "Success is built on human values and interaction. The better we interact with [others]...the better we will serve and work with them" (Tschohl, Hovland, Hillman, 2003, p.101).

The importance of racial and ethnic centrality has been established and the definition of racial identity as well as ethnic identity has been examined, however how do we connect this newfound information back to dealing with diversity? Diversity can be thought of as a concept to help us see the differentness in people as it relates to racial identity and ethnic identity. A clear understanding of identity constructs is the base for which our understanding and tolerance of other people will stem from. Unfortunately, our quest for understanding centrality in its

entirety has only led to more questions. Cokley (2007) was very enlightening when he stated that:

The inconsistent and interchangeable use of ethnicity and race and ethnic and racial identity prohibits researchers from identifying psychological mechanisms that differentiate and distinguish the constructs from each other, which ultimately raises more questions than provides answers in the study of ethnic and racial identity. (p.225)

Because of this 'blended' definition of ethnic identity and racial identity, we will group the two and refer to these identities from here on as racial and ethnic centrality.

According to Ponterotto and Park-Taylor (2007), racial and ethnic centrality goes through varying degrees of importance in our lives as we age and the exploration of our racial and ethnic centrality is both gradual and very subtle. As children, our exploration of racial and ethnic centrality can be mild to moderate, yet as we approach our teenage years, our sense of self becomes more important and our search for self-definition may become more significant. As we continue to age and have more experiences this also helps to shape our racial and ethnic centrality definition and our mindset about the world at large.

In fact, Ponterotto and Park-Taylor (2007) explain that certain triggers, such as the experience of racism, will prompt deeper exploration of racial and ethnic centrality. This is very important as we learn about racial and ethnic diversity, simply because we must understand how experiences that people have shape their perceptions of others in general. For example, suppose you encounter a young Black male who is not particularly nice to White people, per your observation. In order to understand the situation we must take into account why this person (the young Black male) is behaving in a reactive manner. Perhaps he has experienced racism from a White person and now believes all White people are racists, per his experience. In essence, a negative experience has shaped this person and his perception of others outside his race. This

information can assist one in dealing with this unique situation. Remember that a clear understanding of racial and ethnic identity constructs is the base for which our understanding and tolerance of other people will stem from.

However Trimble (2007) had a nice handle on the study of ethnic and racial identity when he stated, "The inconsistencies and incongruities suggest that the field of ethnic and racial identity is in a condition of disorder and confusion", (p.256). In essence, he is stating that every situation that we encounter (in which we perceive a behavior we do not understand from an individual) may potential have a different meaning and each instance may subsequently be different. More research is needed before we can even begin to understand how deeply racial and ethnic identity affects our lives.

Gender Diversity

"Gender is perhaps the most salient and ubiquitous social category in human communities", (Harper & Schoeman, 2003, p.517). With that being said, you would think that people in general would be more tolerant of gender diversity, but unfortunately, society is still evolving when it comes to tolerance. According to Harper and Schoeman (2003), gender is simply a means by which we resolve social ambiguity. This need for categorization by individuals is simply a desperate attempt at control and organization of one's experiences in life. People who regard gender as an important social category will group individuals by perceived stereotypes and 'learned' assumptions, effectively categorizing feminine and masculine individuals.

However, is gender so black and white, so to speak? Too often, we encounter individuals who do not fit into our ideals of feminine and masculine traits. When this occurs, individuals can find themselves confused and feeling awkward on how to interact with a person. Deaux and

LaFrance (1998) explain how the gender belief system mediates our perception of gender and in turn influences our behavior towards others. Gender cognition is made up of three constructs: gender stereotypes, gender attitudes, and self-representation of gender (Tobin, Menon, Menon, Spatta, Hodges, & Perry, 2010). Deaux and LaFrance (1998) imply that interactions between individuals will be complex and varied; essentially each encounter is unique based upon our attitudes, beliefs, and self-perceptions.

Gender bias (being prejudice against males or females) is essentially created by idiosyncrasies that we learn from others or is subsequently shaped by our personal convictions of others. Nevertheless, paradigms are built to be shifted, and this is the aim of gender diversity programs. Unfortunately, a variety of gender bias actions goes on in the world today, particularly in the work place where there are various forms of discrimination. DiPalma (2009) explains that gender discrimination in the workplace include such things as occupational segregation, the wage gap, and the glass ceiling. Occupational segregation is defined as when men and women appear to favor different occupations (DiPalma, 2009). For example, this would be when people make assumptions about what types of work should belong to a woman as opposed to a man and vice versa. The wage gap is defined as the wage difference paid to men in comparison to women (DiPalma, 2009). For example, this is when an employer pays men more money for the same jobs that women hold at their company. The glass ceiling is defined as occupational barriers that prevent qualified women from advancing to higher positions simply because of their sex (DiPalma, 2009). For example, women are often prevented from holding positions in engineering and science due to their sex. Sexual prejudice, negative attitudes or assumptions towards a particular sex, are prevalent in the work place as stereotypes and misconceptions run rampant (DiPalma, 2009).

Unfortunately, according to Martins and Parsons (2007) beliefs about whether workplace discrimination still exist against women differs from one individual to another. In fact, some women have negative attitudes towards workplace gender equality as it relates to Affirmative Action for women (Martins & Parsons, 2007). The reason being is that some women feel as though preferential treatment by an employer may portray woman as weaker candidates in the workplace. However, men may perceive this 'preferential treatment' as ideal as to equalize the treatment of sexes in the workplace.

Gender diversity programs are well aware that gender identity is a personal conviction that leads an individual to discover what feminine or masculine qualities mean to them and others (Oswald & Lindstedt, 2006). With that being said, being sensitive to gender diversity in the workplace may entail revisiting preconceived notions we have about feminine and masculine traits and qualities in general. As the definitions of gender, masculinity, and femininity evolve, we might see preconceptions challenged and changed, if not eradicated and rebuilt in their entirety.

Sexual Orientation Diversity

Sexual orientation is not normally a subject that most people feel comfortable discussing. However, it is a topic that needs to be addressed as it relates to diversity, especially in the workplace. Sexual orientation describes the physical, mental, and emotional attractiveness to the opposite sex, same sex, or both sexes, which is generally defined as being heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transgender. Some people may regard this topic of sexual orientation as taboo in the workplace and would prefer to incorporate a "don't ask, don't tell" policy when it comes to this. However, that isn't an ideal solution to dealing with diversity of sexual orientations.

In fact, a large part of work-life is talking about your home-life, and if your home-life includes a partner of the same sex, one might find oneself playing the pronoun game. A pronoun game is when a person of an alternative sexual orientation refers to their significant other by varies pronouns as to not disclose that their significant other is of the same sex. This can be quite difficult for an individual as they try to explain how their holiday or vacation went with their significant other; this is when sexual orientation becomes an issue in the workplace. If workers feel as though they cannot disclose personal information regarding their lives at work, essentially marginalized, they may become withdrawn from the organizations' corporate culture (Levin, 2004).

Furthermore, the stressors associated with hiding an employee's personal life from coworkers may be so overwhelming that it affects productivity and performance (Winfeld & Spielman, 1995). Such distractions in an employees work habits may be viewed by other employees negatively, creating a further rift in an already broken relationship. One way to combat such behavior is to educate employees on heterosexism (the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual) through diversity training programs aimed at tolerance and acceptance of difference (Winfeld & Spielman, 1995). Employers owe their employees the peace of mind to feel safe and comfortable in their work environments.

In fact, law students from Stanford recently developed a diversity ranking system for prospective employers in order to help them decide on which offers to accept (Liptak, 2007). Such practices will become commonplace as new graduates seek out companies that display diversity in gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity. According to Liptak (2007), it will be harder for employers to entice new employees with only a high starting salary, but will need the advantage of visible diversity. Unfortunately there are many potential employers who feel

similar to Roger Clegg (president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a research group that supports colorblind policies) when he stated, "Diversity is all too often a code word for preferential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity or sex, or lower standards, or being opposed to assimilation," (Liptak, 2007, p.2).

Such employers who share in Roger Clegg's thinking should take into account that both women and men who display behavior uncharacteristic of their gender may be unfairly labeled as gay or lesbian (Garnets, 2002). Again, diversity-training programs would benefit such companies in their outdated way of thinking by educating them on how to assimilate with individual with alternative lifestyles. Ignorance to diversity issues does not excuse employees and employers from practicing appropriate behaviors. In fact, it is another reason to incorporate diversity training programs at companies so that management can better handle diversity issues that may arise.

Age Diversity

Diversity in age may be one of the most visible characteristics of other individuals next to racial-ethnic background that is readily evident. Hiding ones age is next to impossible and is one attribute by which you are constantly judged. Whether that judgment be for the better or the worse, you are categorized regardless by your age. According to a study done by Cristina Simón (professor at the Instituto de Empresa (IE) in Madrid), in conjunction with Wharton University of Pennsylvania, US workers are divided into the following categories:

Traditional workers (born before 1946): They value loyalty and discipline, and they respect authority and hierarchy. These workers played the key role in their companies when economic development was strong.

Baby Boomers (1946-1960): Their critical years for joining the work force – between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1970s – were a period when most European countries enjoyed significant progress. This led to great expectations of success. Currently, this group occupies positions of higher corporate

responsibility, and has the largest proportion of workaholics in history. This is also the generation that gave birth to the “Yuppie” phenomenon.

Generation X (1961-1979): This generation has the best academic training and international experience in history. They have begun to make a break with traditional patterns of behavior, demanding a more informal environment and abandoning hierarchical authority in favor of a more horizontal and flexible structure. They have pioneered policies that involve flexibility and conciliation. This generation is rich in entrepreneurs because personal initiative predominates within a context of skepticism toward large enterprises.

Generation Y (1980-1991): Generation Y is the first in history to have lived their entire lives with information technology. It is not easy for them to understand the world without it. Like members of Generation X, their childhood was comfortable and prosperous. They are more individualistic than earlier generations and demand autonomy in their opinions and behavior. They emphasize personal activities above social and labor considerations (Universia-Knowledge@Wharton, 2007).

Breaking the labor force (working individuals age 16 +) into these categories can help us to better understand the attitudinal differences experienced from one worker to another. It is clearly outlined that Baby Boomers and Generation Xer's have different attitudes towards work environments thus creating a different work ethic than their predecessors. This age diversity naturally leads to diverse opinions on how business operations are performed and can affect cohesion within a group of coworkers. In fact, Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2009) proclaimed, “Organizational demography predicts that higher demographic similarity in the workplace leads to greater perceptions of support and fairness, while heightened levels of dissimilarity or diversity may lead to perceptions of discriminatory treatment”, (p.1).

Managing diversity in the workplace, in regards to age, may be difficult and equal opportunity tactics have their limitations if not drawbacks. According to Riach (2009), managers are under the impression that equal opportunities will lead to equal outcomes and unfortunately, we have found this not to be true. Many companies actually incorporate empty shell policies (fake formal policies that guard against litigation) when in fact they are not at all focused on

equality but are simply a ruse to protect the company from discrimination charges that could possibly be brought forth (Riach, 2009).

As stated earlier, age diversity can affect cohesion within a group, having a direct negative impact on job performance. Therefore, policies and procedures in place to promote equality in the workplace may serve as a double benefit; employees have a more comfortable work environment and companies benefit from the higher production in work (Riach, 2009). Employees may feel as though they are protected by these rules and regulations put in place by their employers. According to Riach (2009), this creates a more inviting environment, which will in turn increase productivity. Employers that do not provide such environments would benefit from diversity training. Employers have to undertake necessary steps to ensure that employees do not feel marginalized in any way; this includes age discrimination at work.

Religious Diversity

The United States Constitution, First Amendment, clearly states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." This is a very definitive way of expressing that 'we the people' have every right to practice and believe the religion of our choosing. However, did the Bill of Rights take into account religious freedom in the workplace? Was this, 'First Amendment' created to protect all Americans religious beliefs in any context from bias and prejudice? As we interpret our rights, we may conclude that everyone has a right to practice their respective religions, free from fear and retaliation, even in the workplace.

Questions like these were raised during President Bill Clinton's administration in the White House, which in turn prompted him to release, the White House guidelines on religious exercise and expression in the summer of 1997. Clearly, observance of religious beliefs and

values in the workplace has been an ongoing debate for quite some time with no end in sight. Respecting employees' beliefs is no easy task for employers, however, in recent years; we have seen some politically correct changes occur in the workplace. They began with things like changing the annual Christmas party to the annual "Holiday Party", or ceasing to celebrate birthdays, as some religions do not recognize this day. However, is this enough change to accommodate differences in religious beliefs?

According to Hodge (2007) and Kuhn (1970), the majority still rules, in the sense that religious views shared by the majority are categorized as normal, decent, or positive. Conversely, more obscure religious views shared by the minority are categorized as abnormal, indecent, or negative, especially if these views conflict with the majority views in some way. This could make for a very hostile and volatile work environment as employees experience this religious discrimination. Employers are left with the responsibility to protect these employees' rights; also, they must provide a safe working environment free from discrimination. This can be difficult when employees and employers alike are not equipped to handle these differences in their environments.

As America becomes more culturally diverse, so will its labor force, however according to Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, and DeFanti (2006) "religious and spiritual diversity is not considered as important in multicultural training as are other kinds of diversity", (p.217). This is most unfortunate for the average worker in America today as spiritual diversity is neglected and ignored in the workplace. Again, according to Hage et al. (2006) awareness or the ability to conceptualize a client's religious and spiritual beliefs will inevitably guide the employer on what topics are appropriate to discuss and when it is appropriate to discuss them. However it can be an overwhelming task to separate and understand religious and spiritual matters as there are

160 denominations, mostly Christians, and more than 700 non-Christian religions active in America today (Hage et al., 2006).

Conclusion

This literature review has been an enlightening journey as we move through the disparities of obtaining a position in the US job market. Applicants are met with prejudice and prejudgments long before ever applying for an open position. The labor force has to be aware of the inequalities and discriminations that they face as they try to secure a position in the job market. However once the job is obtained the challenges of diversity may overwhelm us once again. Dealing with individuals who are different in ways such as gender, race, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, and religious beliefs is hard. The labor force needs training on how to deal with diversity, this is not a skill acquired without practice and understanding.

Sensitivity and diversity training provides individuals with an opportunity to identify, analyze, and address inappropriate or illegal work place behaviors. Being able to identify which behaviors may be perceived as inappropriate is the first step to correction. Furthermore, seeking correction of such behaviors may facilitate a more positive work environment. Training can also provide employees with an environment to explore personal convictions or behaviors in the workplace. Through careful analysis of employee's beliefs and/or attitudes sources of inappropriate behaviors can be identified. Once identified, employees can be given a chance to modify behavior as they interact with others.

Training can improve the quality of customer service as well, by cutting down on miscommunication and misunderstanding. Employees' who understand that cultural differences will affect speech and behavior in customers as well as co-workers will be more tolerant of individuals with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, trainees will be more

politically correct in speech and aware of behaviors that may be perceived as inappropriate or offensive to others. Sensitivity and diversity training can give employees the necessary tools needed to successfully negotiate through increasingly diversified environments with ease and confidence (Proven Training Solutions, 2005). Such training can foster a more productive and satisfying workday within the organization for all employees, employers and customers alike.

However several questions remain: 1) How do we design an effective training workshop that will address sensitivity to diversity in the workplace? 2) How can we understand what makes an employee happy and comfortable in their work environments so that we may improve job satisfaction? 3) How can employers more effectively manage and retain a richly diverse labor force? Questions such as these warrant the research on sensitivity to diversity in the workplace. To answer such questions we need to hold diversity training workshops, which will enable us to understand this issue so that we work more productively together.

Understanding how to deal with diversity in the workplace will only come from listening to employees. This is why a survey to assess the level of knowledge that employees have on the subject of diversity was created. Furthermore, this survey seeks to determine the attitude that employees have toward such workshops as diversity training. This survey will be instrumental in determining the knowledge level of potential workshop attendees as it relates to issues of diversity and should provide insight as to what makes work environments inviting to employees. Finally, from the shared knowledge gained by both the employer and the employee through diversity training, perhaps knowledge will be gained that will help employers understand how to better manage and retain their employees.

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SENSITIVITY AND DIVERSITY TRAINING WORKSHOP



**Kelly Robinson
Governors State University
COMS 890 Graduate Thesis Project**

Governors State University**Communication Workshop: Sensitivity to Diversity in the Workplace****Syllabus**

College/Division: College of Arts and Sciences

Course Title: Communication Workshop: Sensitivity to Diversity in the Workplace

Course Number: COMS 506 RZ

Credit Hours: One graduate or undergraduate credit hour

Instructor's Name: Kelly Robinson, MA

Semester(s) Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

Catalogue (Course) Description: This course offers a discussion on and the practice of the principles and skills needed to effectively deal with diversity in the workplace. Such skills include but are not limited to identifying behaviors that are inappropriate, insensitive, or illegal in the workplace. Students will analyze personal convictions, beliefs, or attitudes that may be offensive or inappropriate in the workplace.

Prerequisites: None

Restrictions: Must be an undergraduate or graduate student

Rationale: Sensitivity & Diversity Training provides individuals with an opportunity to identify, analyze, and address inappropriate/illegal work place behaviors. Being able to identify which behaviors may be perceived as inappropriate is the first step to correction. Furthermore, seeking correction of such behaviors will facilitate a more positive work environment.

Sensitivity & Diversity Training will also provide employees with an environment to explore personal convictions/behaviors in the workplace. Through careful analysis of employee's beliefs and/or attitudes sources of inappropriate behaviors will be indentified. Once identified, employees will be given a chance to modify and better understand such behaviors as they relate to their interactions with others.

Sensitivity & Diversity Training can improve the quality of customers' service as well, by cutting down on miscommunication and misunderstanding. Employees' who understand that cultural differences will effect speech and/or behavior will be more tolerant of individuals with different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, trainees will be more politically correct in speech and aware of behaviors that may be perceived as inappropriate or offensive to others.

Inappropriate employee behavior is sign that your employees may benefit from workplace Sensitivity & Diversity Training. Such training can foster a more productive, satisfying workday within the organization for all employees and customers. Sensitivity & Diversity Training gives employees the necessary tools needed to successfully negotiate through increasingly diversified environments with ease and confidence.

Finally, Sensitivity & Diversity Training will help employees to better understand what employers expect from them. Being appropriate in speech and action is more important in the work place than ever. Understanding what type of behavior and speech that is expected of an employee, trainees will be better able to facilitate that behavior.

Intended Audience: Graduate and Undergraduate students enrolled in any program at GSU.

Disability Statement: GSU is committed to providing all students equal access to all university programs and facilities. Students, who have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability and need academic accommodations, must register with Access Services for Students with Disabilities (ASSD). Please contact the Coordinator of ASSD in Room B1201 in person; by e-mail, assd@govst.edu; or by calling 708.235.3968. If you are already registered, please contact your instructor privately regarding your academic accommodations.

Academic Honesty/ Plagiarism Statement: Students are expected to fulfill academic requirements in an ethical and honest manner. This expectation pertains to the following: use and acknowledgment of the ideas and work of others, submission of work to fulfill course requirements, sharing of work with other students, and appropriate behavior during examinations. These ethical considerations are not intended to discourage people from studying together or from engaging in group projects. The university policy on academic honesty appears in the catalog appendix, which can be found on the website at <http://www.govst.edu/catalog/>.

Class Objectives & Expected Student Outcomes:

1. Identify behaviors that are inappropriate, insensitive, or illegal in the workplace.
2. Analyze personal convictions, beliefs, or attitudes that may be offensive or inappropriate in the workplace.
3. Communicate confidently in a diverse work environment, without fear of inappropriate speech or action.
4. Eliminate or reduce miscommunication and misunderstandings within the workplace by being more mindful of speech and actions.
5. Identify employer's expectations of employee behavior and speech.
6. Identify, discuss, and practice specific skills used to manage diversity associated with the workplace.
7. Participate in exercises designed to evaluate student's comfort level and knowledge of diversity.
8. Identify and exemplify ethical and professional communication practices that promote human relations.

9. Demonstrate ability to use technology including: using appropriate software for assignments, searching the internet and library databases to access relevant literature, and using electronic mail with attachments.

Instructional Modality (ties)/Activities: Lecture/Discussion, Group Activities (e.g., role- plays, impromptu exercises, or assignments)

Texts: None

Evaluation:

50% Class Attendance

50% Active participation in discussion and exercises

A= 90-100%

B= 80-89%

C= 70-79%

D= 65-70%

F= 64% and below

SENSITIVITY AND DIVERSITY TRAINING SURVEY

Please take a few moments to complete this survey/questionnaire. Your answers will be used to compile an upcoming seminar in sensitivity and diversity training at your place of employment. The survey is brief and your attention is needed. Please provide honest and accurate answers so that we can ensure that training meets your needs. Thank you in advance for your time. ***All surveys are confidential and will be used to design training courses only; your answers will not be shared with your employer.***

<i>Briefly answer the questions below (Anonymously).</i>	<i>Demographical Information (Please Circle ONLY one.)</i>				
What would you like to learn about Diversity or Sensitivity Training?	AGE				
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+
	GENDER				
	Female		Male		
What are some obstacles that may hinder sensitivity to diversity?	WORK EXPERIENCE (YEARS)				
	0 to 2	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12+
How might diversified backgrounds influence workplace behavior/habits?	LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
	HS/GED	BA/BS	Masters	Doctorate	
How do you feel about Sensitivity & Diversity Training?	ETHNIC GROUP				
	White	African-American	Latino	Asian	Other

<i>Please answer the questions below, ranking each using the scale provided.</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neutral
1. My job employs culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse people.	5	4	3	2	1
2. All individuals are unique and should be respected despite differences.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I would like training on being more sensitive to a diversified environment.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I generally do not have miscommunications/misunderstandings at work.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I have witnessed inappropriate behavior/speech at work.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I have been the target of inappropriate behavior or speech at work.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I work collaboratively with others without incident.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My inappropriate workplace behavior is cause for serious concern.	5	4	3	2	1
9. My administrators/managers are approachable.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I feel marginalized due to others insensitivity at work.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I feel comfortable expressing my opinion at work functions.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Being sensitive to others feelings and uniqueness is a priority for me.	5	4	3	2	1

DAY ONE: INTRODUCTION TO DIVERSITY & SENSITIVITY**I. INTRODUCTIONS**

- A. Facilitator and participants will introduce themselves and tell one interesting fact they would like to share about themselves.

II. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words that they will be introduced to:
1. **Diversity** - employing a diverse workforce (men and women, people of many generations, people from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds etc).
 2. **Diverse** - Different; unlike; dissimilar; distinct; separate.
 3. **Sensitive** - susceptible to the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of others
 4. **Prejudice** – an attitude about individuals/ groups of people based on stereotypes.
 5. **Discrimination** – an action or behavior based on prejudice.
 6. **Racism** – the prejudice that members of one race are superior to members of other races; discriminatory/abusive behavior towards other races.
 7. **Sexism** - prejudice or discrimination based on gender.
 8. **Heterosexism** - the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual.
- B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.
1. This activity is designed to help participants understand the variations that exist in defining and using such words.

2. This activity will also demonstrate how negative/positive connotations are associated with the use of such words.

III. SCAVENGER HUNT ACTIVITY

A. Participants will be given a list of several questions and will have 20 minutes to find as many people in the room who have fulfilled one of the things on the list. (Only 1 question per person).

1. I am the middle child of my family.
2. My first language is not English it is _____.
3. I have lived in three or more states.
4. I have attended an ethnic cultural celebration.
5. I have clothing from another country that I do not wear to work.
6. I have a favorite ethnic food.
7. My parents were born in another country.
8. I have traveled outside of the country.
9. My family tree represents more than one country.
10. I listen to music from another country.

B. After all participants have completed this, each participant will shares what they perceive as the most interesting new information discovered.

IV. NEW HOMEWORK

A. Participants will be asked to write a 1 to 2 page essay about what diversity means.

1. Give your definition of a diverse working/ living environment?
2. How do you handle diversity in your environment?

DAY TWO: INTRODUCTION TO RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY**I. WELCOME BACK AND RECAP OF DAY ONE**

- A. Welcome participants back for the second day of Sensitivity & Diversity Training. Recap our discussion from yesterday and answer any questions that may be left over from that lecture and discussion.

II. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to discuss their papers on what diversity means to them.
- B. Class will have a roundtable discussion on interesting facts and stories about the homework assignment.

III. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words they will be introduced to:
 - 1. **Race** - groups that share physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture, and other hereditary traits.
 - 2. **Ethnicity** - groups that share common experiences or traditions, history, or culture.
 - 3. **Racism** – the prejudice that members of one race are superior to members of other races; discriminatory/abusive behavior towards other races.
- B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole
 - 1. This activity is designed to help participants understand the variations that exist in defining and using such words.

2. This activity will also demonstrate how negative/positive connotations are associated with the use of such words.

IV. SHARING ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be given a list of questions to ask other participants in the class.

There is a time limit of (2) minutes per person to answer questions.

1. What is your name and nickname?
 2. What is your ethnic background?
 3. Where are you from? Where were you born?
 4. Where are your parents from? Where were they born?
 5. Which generation do your parents represent here in the US for your family?
 6. Name a custom or tradition in your family.
- B. Participants will have a greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity in the group as well as a realization of things they have in common.
 - C. After all participants have completed this exercise, participants will share what they perceive as the most interesting new information discovered in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.

V. NEW HOMEWORK

- A. Participants will be asked to write a 1 to 2 page paper sharing cultural similarities and differences that they have with other workshop participants.

1. Are there any participants with a different cultural background than you that have similarities in customs or traditions?
2. Did you learn something new about your ethnicity? Or someone else's?
3. Did you learn something new about someone else's cultural background?

DAY THREE: INTRODUCTION TO GENDER DIVERSITY

I. WELCOME BACK AND RECAP OF DAY TWO

- A. Welcome participants back for the third day of Sensitivity & Diversity Training.
Recap our discussion from yesterday and answer any questions that may be left over from that lecture and discussion.

II. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to discuss their papers on cultural differences and similarities.
- B. Class will have a roundtable discussion about the homework assignment.

III. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words that they will be introduced to:
 - 1. **Gender** - characteristics that are seen to distinguish between male and female entities, based on biological sex; one's social role or gender identity.
 - 2. **Femininity** - refers to qualities and behaviors judged by a particular culture to be ideally associated with or especially appropriate to women and girls.
 - 3. **Masculinity** - refers to qualities and behaviors judged by a particular culture to be ideally associated with or especially appropriate to men and boys.
 - 4. **Sexism** - prejudice or discrimination based on gender.
- B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.
 - 1. This activity is designed to help participants understand the variations that exist in defining and using such words.

IV. VIDEO CRITIQUE

- A. Participants will be asked to view the video “*He Said, She Said: Gender, Language, & Communication*”, by Deborah Tannin. Los Angeles, CA: Into the classroom Media.
- B. Participants will be given a handout of questions pertaining to the video. At the conclusion of the video, participants will be asked to answer all questions and the class as a whole will have a roundtable discussion.
1. Are there any themes/subtitles/main points that stood out in the video?
 2. Have you ever experienced any of these male/female communication style differences seen in the video? If so, how did that make you feel?
 3. How might these male/female communication style differences affect relationships within a work environment?
 4. What are some things we can do or say to reduce male/female communication style differences?

V. NEW HOMEWORK

- A. Participants will be asked to write a 1 to 2 page paper explaining a male/female communication style differences experienced/witnessed in their professional lives.
1. How have male/female communication style differences caused conflict in communication in the workplace?
 2. How might you be able to reduce these male/female communication style differences in your professional life?

DAY FOUR: INTRODUCTION TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION DIVERSITY**I. WELCOME BACK AND RECAP OF DAY THREE**

- A. Welcome participants back for the fourth day of Sensitivity & Diversity Training. Recap our discussion from yesterday and answer any questions that may be left over from that lecture and discussion.

II. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to discuss their papers on communication style differences.
- B. Class will have a roundtable discussion about the homework assignment

III. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words that they will be introduced to:
1. **Sexual orientation** - describes the physical, mental, and emotional attractiveness to the opposite sex, same sex, or both sexes, which is generally defined as being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.
 2. **Heterosexism** - the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual.
 3. **Homophobia** - negative attitudes and feelings towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and in some cases transgender and intersex people.
- B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.
1. This activity is designed to help participants understand the variations that exist in defining and using such words.

2. This activity will also demonstrate how negative/positive connotations are associated with the use of such words.

IV. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

A. Once the formal definitions are obtained, we will begin a discussion using the following discussion questions as guidelines.

1. What does it mean to be a girl/boy or woman/man?
2. Have you ever considered how you developed your gender identity?
3. How might gender identity be affected by your experiences growing up?
4. How did school play a role in your understanding what it means to be boy or girl?
5. Have you ever been ridiculed for doing or saying something that others didn't consider masculine or feminine? How did that make you feel? How did you react? How did it affect your life beyond this incident?

B. This activity will offer insight into how gender identity is formed.

C. This activity will also illuminate issues such as gender socialization and oppression.

V. NEW HOMEWORK

A. Participants will be asked to write a 1 to 2 page paper on what gender identity means to them.

1. In order to complete this assignment students must reflect on definitions and terms used in class.
2. This paper should address thoughts on how gender identity is formed and how we characterize feminine and masculine traits in individuals.

DAY FIVE: INTRODUCTION TO AGE DIVERSITY

I. WELCOME BACK AND RECAP OF DAY FOUR

- A. Welcome participants back for the fifth day of Sensitivity & Diversity Training.
Recap our discussion from yesterday and answer any questions that may be left over from that lecture and discussion.

II. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to discuss their papers on gender identity.
- B. Class will have a roundtable discussion about the homework assignment

III. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words that they will be introduced to:
 - 1. **Traditional workers (born before 1946):** They value loyalty and discipline, and they respect authority and hierarchy. These workers played the key role in their companies when economic development was strong.
 - 2. **Baby Boomers (1946-1960):** Their critical years for joining the work force – between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1970s – were a period when most European countries enjoyed significant progress. This led to great expectations of success. Currently, this group occupies positions of higher corporate responsibility, and has the largest proportion of workaholics in history. This is also the generation that gave birth to the “Yuppie” phenomenon.
 - 3. **Generation X (1961-1979):** This generation has the best academic training and international experience in history. They have begun to

make a break with traditional patterns of behavior, demanding a more informal environment and abandoning hierarchical authority in favor of a more horizontal and flexible structure. They have pioneered policies that involve flexibility and conciliation. This generation is rich in entrepreneurs because personal initiative predominates within a context of skepticism toward large enterprises.

4. **Generation Y (1980-1991):** Generation Y is the first in history to have lived their entire lives with information technology. It is not easy for them to understand the world without it. Like members of Generation X, their childhood was comfortable and prosperous. They are more individualistic than earlier generations and demand autonomy in their opinions and behavior. They emphasize personal activities above social and labor considerations.

B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.

1. This activity is designed to help participants understand the variations that exist in the workers that make up the labor force today.
2. This activity will also demonstrate how generational difference will account for the differences in work attitude and work ethic.

IV. NEW HOMEWORK

A. Participants will be asked to write a 1 to 2 page paper on which generation they represent in the labor force.

1. Which generation do you represent? Does your work ethic match those of your generation? Which generation is the most difficult to work with? Why?

DAY SIX: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

I. WELCOME BACK AND RECAP OF DAY FOUR

- A. Welcome participants back for the sixth and final day of Sensitivity & Diversity Training. Recap our discussion from yesterday and answer any questions that may be left over from that lecture and discussion.

II. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to discuss their papers on work force generations.
- B. Class will have a roundtable discussion about the homework assignment

III. DEFINITIONS ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- A. Participants will be asked to brainstorm and give definitions for several words that they will be introduced to:
 1. **Religion** - A religion is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe; a strong belief in a supernatural power or powers that control human destiny.
 2. **Spirituality** - concerned with or affecting the spirit or soul; "a spiritual approach to life"; "spiritual fulfillment"; "spiritual values".
 3. **Cultural Literacy** - Knowledge of and ability to discuss the history of and major concepts underlying a culture, particularly one's own and those of one's peers.
 4. **Personal Boundaries** - guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for themselves what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around them and how they will respond when someone steps outside those limits.

- B. Definitions will be written on the board and discussed in a roundtable discussion by the class as a whole.
 - 1. This definitions activity is designed to help participants explore the meaning of words such as religion and spirituality and to understand the difference between the two.
 - 2. Participants will also discuss personal boundaries of coworkers and cultural literacy regarding others spiritual and religious beliefs.

IV. VIDEO CRITIQUE

- A. Participants will be asked to view the video, "*Discrimination against Atheists in the USA*".
- B. Participants will be given a handout of question pertaining to the video. At the conclusion of the video, participants will be asked to answer all questions and the class as a whole will have a roundtable discussion.
 - 1. Is it okay to ask other people to pray with you?
 - 2. If 91 % of the USA believes in GOD, can we assume that those people are Christians?
 - 3. Are non-religious people immoral?
 - 4. Should atheist pretend to be religious so that they can get along with others?

V. RECAP OF ENTIRE WORKSHOP

- A. Participants will be thanked for taking the workshop of Sensitivity and Diversity in the Workplace.
- B. Facilitator will answer any questions that maybe left over from any previous lectures and discussions covered in the workshop.