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**Connie Rae Bateman**

**Editor**

**University of North Dakota**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS.....	III
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....	VII
THE PARADOX OF FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH DEPENDENCE .....	1
Susan Sze, Niagara University	
Peter Alexander Cowden, Niagara University	
DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PREDICT IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT?.....	11
Ajay K Jain, Aarhus University, Denmark	
SURNAME DISCRIMINATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS.....	25
Brandon Walcutt, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	
Louise Patterson, Kyunghee University	
Sangyun Seo, Kyunghee University	
PREDICTING IMPLEMENTATION FAILURE IN ORGANIZATION CHANGE.....	39
Phillip Decker, University of Houston—Clear Lake	
Roger Durand, University of Houston—Clear Lake	
Clifton O. Mayfield, University of Houston—Clear Lake	
Christy McCormack, Decision Strategies, Houston, TX	
David Skinner, Decision Strategies, Houston, TX	
Grady Perdue, University of Houston—Clear Lake	
SOCIAL SKILL IN WORKPLACE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS.....	61
Sharon Y. Wu, K12 Inc.	
Daniel B. Turban, University of Missouri	
Yu Ha Cheung, Hong Kong Baptist University	
LAWSUITS WALK IN ON TWO FEET THE BULLY IN THE WORKPLACE.....	73
Julie Indvik, California State University, Chico	
Pamela R. Johnson, California State University, Chico	

WHEN DOES BREACH OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL-CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AFFECT THE EMPLOYEE’S DESIRE TO STAY?.....	79
Bruce T. Teague, Eastern Washington University	
K. Damon Aiken, Eastern Washington University	
George W. Watson, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville	
WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF PSYCHOPATHIC TRAITS IN A SUPERVISOR ON EMPLOYEES’ PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS? .....	91
Cynthia Mathieu, Universite du Quebec a Trois-Rivieres	
Paul Babiak, Anubis-Research	
Daniel N. Jones, University of British Columbia	
Craig Neumann, University of North Texas	
Robert D. Hare, University of British Columbia	
CREATING A CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF CIVILITY IN A SEA OF INTOLERANCE.....	95
C.W. Von Bergen, Southeastern Oklahoma State University	
Martin S. Bressler, Southeastern Oklahoma State University	
George Collier, Southeastern Oklahoma State University	
NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION ON THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS OF GAY AND LESBIAN PROTÉGÉS .....	115
Robin Church, Ryerson University	
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG INDIVIDUAL GREEN ORIENTATION, EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE GREEN MOVEMENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JAMAICA AND THE UNITED STATES .....	125
Lillian Y. Fok, University of New Orleans	
Susan M. L. Zee, Southeastern Louisiana University	
Sandra J. Hartman, University of New Orleans	
HOLDING THE HELM: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON GROUP CREATIVITY, AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING CULTURE.....	145
Simone T. A. Phipps, Macon State College	
Leon C. Prieto, Savannah State University	
Satish Verma, Louisiana State University	

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*. The journal is owned and published by the DreamCatchers Group, LLC. The Editorial Board and the Editors are appointed by the Allied Academies, Inc., a non profit association of scholars whose purpose is to encourage and support the advancement and exchange of knowledge, understanding and teaching throughout the world. The editorial mission of the *Journal* is to publish empirical and theoretical manuscripts which advance knowledge in the areas of organizational culture, organizational communication, conflict and conflict resolution. We hope that the *Journal* will prove to be of value to the many organizational scholars around the world.

The articles contained in this volume have been double blind refereed. The acceptance rate for manuscripts in this issue, 25%, conforms to our editorial policies.

We intend to foster a supportive, mentoring effort on the part of the referees which will result in encouraging and supporting writers. We welcome different viewpoints because in differences we find learning; in differences we develop understanding; in differences we gain knowledge; and, in differences we develop the discipline into a more comprehensive, less esoteric, and dynamic metier.

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Connie Rae Bateman  
Editor  
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# CREATING A CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF CIVILITY IN A SEA OF INTOLERANCE

**C.W. Von Bergen, Southeastern Oklahoma State University**  
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## ABSTRACT

*Promoting tolerance could be seen as a key weapon in battling prejudice but it seems that the definition of tolerance appears to be changing. The classical definitions of tolerance defined that others can be entitled to their opinions and have the right to express them even though one may disagree with them, one can live in peace with such differences. In recent years, however, some consider tolerance to mean that all ideas and practices must be accepted and affirmed and that an appreciation of differences can be considered the ultimate virtue. This new definition alienates many who value equality and justice and limits the effectiveness of diversity initiatives that teach tolerance. The authors offer authentic tolerance as an alternative, incorporating respect and civility toward others in the workplace, not necessarily approval of their ideas and practices. "Authentic tolerance" (civility) could result in improved teamwork and organizational goal attainment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Bill Watterson created a well-known comic strip titled Calvin and Hobbes describing the raucous antics of a 6-year-old boy, Calvin, and his real-only-to-him stuffed tiger companion, Hobbes. In that comic strip Watterson (1996) describes the six-year-old hero giving a lame defense for not doing the right thing and denies that moral value provides any meaning for philosophically sophisticated people like him (p. 129). Hobbes, Calvin's conscience-cum-tiger, however, raises some doubts about Calvin's notion of tolerance.

In this paper, like Hobbes, the authors express some concerns about tolerance as currently advocated and address this controversial concept and its part in contemporary American society. Lickona (2002) defines tolerance as "the ability to accept the values and beliefs of others," (p. 1). This definition of tolerance poses a dilemma: how can individuals be asked to accept all people's values and practices when they may believe some of those ideas and behaviors wrong? How, for example, can one ask supporters on opposite sides of the abortion and homosexuality debates to accept the validity of each other's perspectives?

Consider the case of Carrie Prejean. As a contestant in the 2009 Miss USA Beauty Pageant, openly gay pageant judge Perez Hilton questioned her views on gay marriage. When

she replied that she believed that marriage should be between a man and a woman, Mr. Hilton called Ms. Prejean “the B word” on his popular blog and said he would have liked to call her something stronger (Hilton, 2009). Other gay activists took a more measured and civil approach. For example, Rich Tafel (2009) of the gay advocacy group the Log Cabin Republicans said:

“I think it was a perfectly acceptable question. And though I completely disagree with her, I think her response was perfectly fine, too. Calling this woman an unprintable name, as Perez Hilton did, is indefensible. All of us have a belief system, whether it is informed by our faith or a secular worldview. The freedom to share those even unpopular positions is what makes this nation great. In my hundreds of debates for gay rights with Christian conservatives, I was often subject to mean and personal attacks and at times was concerned for my safety. As the tide turns in favor of gay equality, what a sad victory it will be if we become the new bullies. The crime here is not that people have opinions we disagree with. The crime is treating those who disagree with us with the same incivility that they treated us to.”

Another example involves President Barack Obama speaking of another ideological tension when he delivered the commencement address at Notre Dame University in spring, 2009 amid much public controversy and protest demonstrations. Some “pro-life” persons thought that the president should not be invited to speak at a Catholic university because his “pro-choice” position on abortion contradicts Church doctrine. Many also objected to the university awarding him an honorary degree. President Obama devoted a section of his address to the protests—not on the merits of one abortion position over another but rather on public discourse; i.e., on how Americans should engage in public debate on issues with which they fundamentally disagree. President Obama observed that while opposing views would and should be presented with passion and conviction, they could be done “without reducing those with differing views to caricature (Obama, 2009).” Then he suggested a model: “Open hearts. Open minds. Fair-minded words (Obama, 2009)” in the context of “... friendship, civility, hospitality and especially love” (Obama, 2009). These words are remarkably consistent with our concept of authentic tolerance.

Even raising questions about the dogma of such experts can be problematic as Harvard University president Lawrence Summers discovered after he simply speculated about differences in scientific ability between men and women (Mansfield, 2006) resulting in his forced resignation. According to Bennett (1994) these illuminati are “found among academics and intellectuals, in the literary world, in journals of political opinion, in Hollywood, in the artistic community, in mainline religious institutions, and in some quarters of the media” (p. 26). They could be more powerful than their numbers would normally allow because they might be considered trend setters and opinion makers in areas such as moral values, political principles, and fundamental ideas. These cognoscenti can often be perceived as imparting important truths when they write articles and books, give speeches, make movies, and report stories. They often interpret events that define the permissible and the impermissible, the acceptable and the unacceptable, the preferred and the disdained; in short, they are the filter through which many Americans are informed about events. Hunter (2006) believes the power of these pundits can be

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made even greater by the public's inability to challenge their stark, oftentimes uncompromising rhetoric and reframing of issues, as well as access to large audiences of TV reporters, paparazzi, or others with direct connections to the media.

Respect should be accorded to the person. Whether his or her ideas or behavior should be tolerated might be an entirely different issue. Tolerance of persons must also be distinguished from *tolerance of ideas*. Tolerance of persons requires that each person's views get a courteous hearing, not that all views have equal worth, merit, or truth. Rejecting another's ideas should not be equated with disrespect for the person. The view that no person's ideas can be any better or truer than another's can be considered irrational and absurd. It would be inappropriate to tolerate such things as racism, sexism, or hate speech. This view can be considered consistent with renowned psychotherapist Albert Ellis' (2004) concept of unconditional other-acceptance which declares that one is not required to "... tolerate the antisocial and sabotaging actions of other people.... But you always accept *them*, their personhood, and you never damn their total *selves*. Ellis (2004) believes that you tolerate their *humanity* while disagreeing with some of their *actions*" (p. 212).

Issues such as these often can be based upon differing religious beliefs. Even the most ecumenical of faiths view other religious beliefs as incompatible with their own and hold that there can be eternal consequences for accepting the legitimacy of other religious' truth claims. For instance, many Christian parents believe that encouraging acceptance of belief systems that deny Christ's divinity risks their children betraying God and earning damnation. Roberts and Lester (2006) believe Orthodox Muslim parents could feel similarly about education that encourages children to accept the legitimacy of beliefs that deny the centrality of Muhammad's revelation and behavior to human experience.

Should we accept, appreciate, and embrace all differences? Should everyone be required to endorse, affirm, and celebrate the following diverse beliefs, values, and conduct in the name of tolerance?

1. The Holocaust did not happen.
2. "In God We Trust" should be removed from our currency.
3. Condoms should be available to school children starting in about the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
4. Involuntary female circumcision or any procedure involving the partial or total removal of the external genitalia should be permitted for cultural, religious, or other non-therapeutic reasons.
5. People with HIV/AIDS should be sterilized to help prevent the spread of the disease through sexual activity.
6. Unions only suck up membership fees from workers and make unrealistic demands on companies causing them to go bankrupt; for example, the auto industry

Several researchers (Murphy, 1997; Roberts and Lester, 2006) suggest that tolerance could be universally recognized by both critics and supporters as central to the liberal tradition. Many of the above statements might be considered abhorrent to some people but should such disagreement mean that those who oppose the above values and conduct are prejudiced, hateful,

bigoted, and intolerant? Probably not, since not *all* beliefs, behavior, or both, must be endorsed but only those principles, sentiments, ideas, and political attitudes approved by the shrill, intrusive cultural and political intelligentsia with their aura of self-assured moral and intellectual superiority within the liberal tradition.

Businesses increasingly globalize their operations which require workers to be able to interact with fellow workers, suppliers and customers from around the globe. In addition, increased employee diversity in the workplace calls for management and workers to be able to work together to achieve common goals and objectives despite different cultural backgrounds and personal beliefs. The workplace of today calls for tolerance and understanding without necessarily accepting other beliefs contrary to our own.

We address the controversial topic of tolerance by beginning with a brief history of tolerance, including its role in diversity training. We then identify three definitions of tolerance: the classical view of *tolerance as endurance*, the neo-classical definition of *tolerance as acceptance*, and our proposed understanding of *tolerance as civility*. In the next section, we review the concept of intolerance and then offer a discussion on the value of authentic dialogue. Finally, we conclude with a summary that emphasizes respect and dignity of all persons rather than required acceptance and endorsement of all attitudes, beliefs, and opinions, action, conduct, and practices, tastes and sensibilities, or whole ways of life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Historical Background

Although held in high regard by Locke (1689), Voltaire (1763), and Mill (1859), the concept of tolerance often lacked widespread acceptance. Colesante & Biggs (1999) provide the example of early Western religious scholars St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas who viewed tolerance as a vice that can corrupt society and harm innocent people. Likewise, a value system that enjoyed near universal support in the United States for a number of years described a good person to be “trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent” (Boy Scouts of America, n. d.)—but not tolerant. Believing in and practicing the Boy Scout values, even if not a Scout (or male) would often be highly correlated with being a citizen of excellent character and comportment.

Oberdiek (2001) states that tolerance can be considered “indispensable for any decent society—or at least for societies encompassing deeply divergent ways of life” (p. 23) characteristic of many Western cultures. Highly homogenous societies may be able to dispense with tolerance or greatly reduce its centrality but most of the world cannot. According to Mandela and Robinson (2001) tolerance often can be recognized today as an especially important characteristic in pluralist, multicultural communities seeking to be free of oppression, violence, indignities, and discrimination.

Hallemeier (2006) suggests tolerance might also be considered essential or a highly desirable quality in U.S. society and one of the few non-controversial values today (Kreeft, 2007). Many people insist that in a world burdened by injustice, inequality, homophobia, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, and related bigotry that the best solution to address these evils could be to demonstrate a greater degree of tolerance (Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference, 2009). Within the last generation tolerance rose to the apex of America's public moral philosophy and today many believe a good, moral person to be tolerant (Tolerance.org, n. d.) and that such tolerance can be a virtue essential for democracy and civilized life. Lickona (2002) offers that the absence of tolerance could be considered the root of much evil: hate crimes, religious and political persecution, and terrorism.

Many consider tolerance so important that a museum dedicated to tolerance can be found in Los Angeles (Museum of Tolerance, 2006) as well as a Tolerance Center in New York (n. d.). Each provides a powerful selling point for any theory or practice that can claim it. Vogt (1997) believes that nowhere can this be more evident than in the prominence given tolerance in education and training programs addressing issues of multiculturalism, inclusion, and diversity.

### **Diversity Training**

According to Lansing and Cruser (2009), diversity training today could be considered so important that it may be found as a common topic now incorporated in nearly every major collegiate and graduate business program. Diversity training can also be found in the workplace. For instance, an industry report on training in the United States prepared by the widely circulated practitioner-oriented *Training* magazine, indicated that 72 per cent of responding companies offered some form of diversity training (Galvin, 2003) while the Society for Human Resource Management found that 67 per cent of U.S. organizations provided multicultural training program initiatives (Esen, 2005).

When teaching about differences in an ever more diverse world among the most salient questions in an era of accelerated globalization could be how different cultures, nationalities, ethnicities and races can coexist peacefully in an increasingly borderless world. The answer offered by many diversity training professionals is teaching *tolerance*. In such developmental efforts today one commonly hears that individuals should recognize and acknowledge such differences and be inclusive and open to them. Trainees will often be told to value, endorse, affirm, and celebrate differences and advised to appreciate, respect, and accept diverging opinions, practices, and ways of life to create a climate of *tolerance*. Some authors, such as Schlesinger (1992) warn that excessive emphasis upon the differences between Americans could produce a Balkanization of American society. Workshop participants are frequently told that everything should be considered different—not better or worse—but equal, and that a person's view should be considered wrong automatically if it rejects the equal legitimacy of all views.

Indeed, Dubos (1981) suggested that “Human diversity makes tolerance ... a requirement for survival” (p. 115).

It can be noted that promoting and advocating tolerance continues to be taught extensively and its endorsement can be central to many organizational diversity and multicultural training initiatives and found to be widespread (Clements & Jones, 2008; Wildermuth & Gray, 2005). When entering “diversity training in the workplace” and “tolerance” in the Google search engine some 182,000 hits registered illustrating tolerance as a key component of inclusion and multicultural training (Diversity Training in the Workplace, 2009). Additionally, *Teaching Tolerance Magazine* showcases innovative tolerance initiatives across the country (*Teaching Tolerance Magazine*, n. d.). Benjamin (1996) states that in higher education we are told that diversity training should emphasize “tolerance ... and respect for differences in appearance, values and attitudes, perspectives, assumptions, and conduct” (p. 155).

### **Meanings of Tolerance**

Weissberg (2008) argues that tolerance seems to have developed a change in definition over the years from the obligation not to tolerate the immoral to the requirement of accepting the legitimacy of the morally different; from tolerance as enduring the odious to tolerance as nearly blank-check acceptance of a myriad of differences. This could be considered consistent with Apel’s (1997) proposal to distinguish the more traditional concept of tolerance, or, in his terminology, “negative tolerance,” from the newer concept of “positive tolerance” (p. 199). Apel (1997) further maintained that negative tolerance with its emphasis on obligations to refrain from interfering with other people’s traditions or opinions as not enough within a pluralistic, multicultural society and that we have a moral responsibility to “support people in their pursuit of their ideals of life” (p. 204). To avoid such clearly prejudicial wording, the terms “classical” and “neo-classical” tolerance are used in this paper.

### **Classical Definition of Tolerance**

Classic tolerance derives from the term’s Latin roots—*tolerare* or *tolerantia*—the first the verb meaning to endure, the second the noun denoting forbearance (Weissberg, 2008). Sullivan, Marcus, and Piereson (1982), for example, define tolerance as the “willingness to ‘put up with’ those things that one rejects” (p. 2) and a readiness to permit the expression of ideas or interests one opposes. In other words, something repugnant allowed to exist without significant action on the part of those offended. The classical definition involves recognition that a civil society must include a willingness to bear with people whose ideas and practices are not merely different, but believed to be wrong.

The classical definition of tolerance incorporates the idea that everyone can be entitled to their own opinion and that people should recognize and respect others’ beliefs, practices, etc.,

without necessarily agreeing, sympathizing or sharing in them and to bear with someone or something not especially liked. In this view, individuals accept the right of others to hold differing opinions (have different practices, and be different than themselves)—while not accepting their behavior as right for themselves or society. Within the classical understanding, tolerance entails enduring someone or something not especially liked. The classical definition of tolerance includes an element of grudging forbearance (Fallacy of Positive Tolerance, n. d.). Oberdiek (2001) views tolerance as best captured by the slogans of “Live and let live,” “You go your way, I’ll go mine,” or “To each his own” (pp. 29-30).

Classic tolerance simply means the ability to hold on to one’s convictions while accepting the right of others to hold on to theirs. Tolerance cannot be described as indifference or acquiescence but rather, recognition of difference. Tolerance does not have to do with accepting another person’s belief, only his or her right to have that belief. It could be considered similar to Voltaire’s famous words (cited in Guterman, 1963) “I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write” (p. 143). Thus, classical tolerance differentiates between what a person thinks or does, and the person himself or herself.

### **Neo-Classical Definition of Tolerance**

Today, some reject the classical definition of tolerance because it does not go far enough—according to Oberdiek (2001) only a half measure. What might be needed, these critics argue, would be to move beyond tolerance as classically understood toward a positive appreciation of and an unqualified agreement with differences: a shift from forbearance to acceptance. Therefore, more recent understandings of tolerance suggest that individuals should fully welcome and unambiguously endorse others’ alternative ways of feeling, thinking, and acting (Oberdiek, 2001). The neo-classical definition of tolerance asks citizens to be open-minded and empathetic toward a virtually endless parade of differences; asking them to work sympathetically to build institutional and cultural arrangements that will accommodate different ways of life. Gadamer (1975) believes a “fusion of horizons” (p. 273) necessary.

Interestingly, it appears that the graciousness implied in the “appreciate differences” brand of tolerance can be selective with only those residing on the political spectrum’s left side deserving acceptance and celebration. For example, while gays and civil rights groups are generally applauded, one might typically find silence when it comes to fundamentalist Christians or the military. Such a one-sided interpretation of neo-classical tolerance often engenders the very divisiveness it proposes to eliminate.

Rather than a begrudging endurance implied in the traditional definition of tolerance, the “appreciate differences” brand of tolerance includes a duty to approve and embrace diverse beliefs, customs, and behaviors (McDowell & Hostetler, 1998; Odell, n. d.; Weissberg, 2008)—accepting the odious despite the odium. Tolerance today can be considered largely redefined by those seeking to broaden what it means to endure, while diminishing that defined as offensive

and distasteful in the hope of achieving legitimacy for those perceived as unfairly marginalized, stigmatized, under-appreciated, or otherwise disdained. Some consider the new tolerance to simply reflect a natural evolutionary process. Using homosexuality as an example (although applicable to disdained ethnic/racial groups), society advanced from killing homosexuals to criminalizing homosexuality, to treating it as a psychological disorder, to just accepting it as a repugnant condition to embracing homosexuality as perfectly normal.

Weissberg (2008) believes that this new interpretation of tolerance requires affirming the rightness of the nonconventional and nontraditional; bearing the objectionable replaced by “venerat[ing] the objectionable” (p. 126). In the UN’s decision to declare 1995, “The Year of Tolerance.” The U.N. mistook toleration for affirmation. In the declaration the U.N. defined tolerance as “respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human...It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism ...” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1995).

In a religious context such homogenization exhortations led to claims that all religions have the same basic teachings and that there are many ways to be saved. However, for many Christians such thinking denies the central role accepting Christ plays in salvation. Similarly, a Muslim would betray his faith if he were to accept the view of Jews and Christians that Muhammad is not a true prophet. The henotheistic belief supports the possibility of worshiping one deity without denying the worship of other deities as central to Hinduism. This belief in henotheism renders Hindus unable to accept the legitimacy of truth claims made by monotheistic religions that only one God exists and considers worshiping several deities idolatrous. Roberts and Lester (2006) believe such conundrums have led some to attempt to reduce religion to the Decalogue and the Golden Rule and ignore the role of practice, sacraments, and sacred space and time which form the core of many Christian and non-Christian forms of religion. Indeed, why hold attachments to anything since nothing could be better than anything else? In a world where such deeply rooted practices can be perceived as “arbitrary” any choice might be no better than any alternative and thus easily interchangeable. Such a world can be considered one of indifference where nothing can be worth defending rather than one of equality. Equality, however, does mean that one must be urged to accept the objective value of different beliefs for everyone and those individuals should be encouraged to recognize the subjective force other beliefs hold for their adherents.

Newly fashioned tolerance, as promulgated today, often raises suspicion of the idea that something may be offensive and rejects the idea that one can be free to express such distaste. To evaluate something as questionable or wrong and publicly say so can be considered intolerant, insensitive, and offensive. Few ideas or behaviors can be opposed, regardless of how gracious, without inviting the charge of being hateful or insensitive, or some other harsh accusation. Neo-classical tolerance goes beyond respecting a person’s right to think and behave differently, and demands that practically every nontraditional value claim and personal practice be made



morally legitimate. Helmbock's (1996) definition of tolerance suggests "...that every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle, and perceptions of truth claims are equal" (p. 2). Thus, not only does everyone have an equal right to his or her beliefs, but all beliefs are equal. All values are equal. All lifestyles are equal. According to McDowell & Hostetler (1998) all truth claims are equal. In a world that holds all values inherently equal and a proclaimed hierarchy only reflects power, not demonstrable worth, why should one embrace capitalism over socialism or Islam in favor of Judaism or the Democratic Party instead of the Republican Party?

## DISCUSSION

### Intolerance

In the lexicon of today's tolerance pedagogues, respecting an individual means accepting and approving their ideals (beliefs, behaviors, and practices). Weissberg (2008) believes that to argue otherwise could invite charges of engaging in "mean-spirited, right-wing polemic endorsing hatefulness" (p. xi). Indeed, one of the worst things that can be said of a person today might be calling someone intolerant. Calling someone intolerant helps demonize a particular social, ethnic, cultural, or religious group, and faulting their worldview as the most basic, primary cause of their perceived prejudice. There can be a litany of words and phrases that like bullets from a machine gun are shot in rapid fire reflexively to attack the character and motivations of others using slander, intimidation, and pejorative personal statements: bigoted, dictatorial, narrow-minded, and inflexible. Indeed, those who have firmly-held beliefs can be considered legalistic individuals with non-negotiable doctrinal convictions, deserving, in some cases, to be terminated from their job.

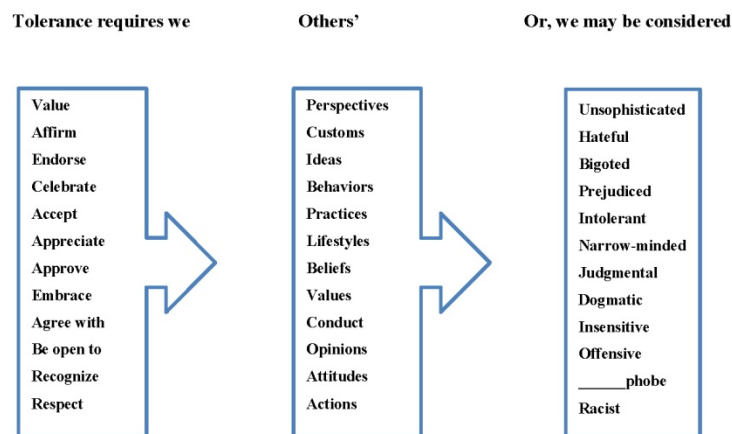
Henle and Holger (2004) describe what AT&T representatives seemed to have thought when they fired Albert Buonanno after he refused to agree to portions of the company's employee handbook that he believed violated his religious beliefs. All employees were required to sign a written acknowledgment that they had received AT&T's new employee handbook and sign a "Certificate of Understanding." The certificate contained a statement that the employee signing it "agreed with and accepted" all of the terms and provisions of the handbook, including its policies and rules. The handbook contained a provision that "each person at AT&T Broadband is charged with the responsibility to fully recognize, respect and value the differences among all of us," including "sexual orientation." However, Mr. Buonanno's strongly held religious beliefs regarding the homosexual lifestyle prevented him from condoning or approving the practice of homosexuality. Buonanno shared his concerns with his immediate supervisor and informed him that he had no problem declaring he would not discriminate against or harass people who were different from him, including homosexuals but he could not sign the statement, because it contradicted his sincerely held religious beliefs. Mr. Buonanno stated, "As a Christian, I love and appreciate all people regardless of their lifestyle. But I cannot value homosexuality

and any different religious beliefs” (p. 155). AT&T informed Buonanno that they would terminate his employment should he refuse to sign the certificate. He declined to sign the document and AT&T immediately terminated his employment. Mr. Buonanno then sued AT&T resulting in an award of \$146, 260 in damages (see *Buonanno v. AT&T Broadband LLC*, 2004). According to Hudson (2004) employers may not force employees to adopt beliefs that may be inconsistent with employees’ religious beliefs and that “Employees shouldn’t be forced to forswear their religious values in the name of tolerance” (p. 1C).

Even in institutions committed to academic freedom and diversity of viewpoints just raising questions about such dogma can be problematic, as Harvard University President Lawrence Summers discovered when he mused in 2006 at a closed-door economics conference that innate differences between men and women might explain in part why more men than women reach the top echelons in math and science (Mansfield, 2006). Many denounced Summers for even surfacing such a question (not an assertion of belief) followed quickly by a no confidence vote by his faculty resulting in his speedy resignation.

To better manage diversity in organizations and to promote inclusiveness, many multicultural training programs today offer the tolerance as acceptance model as an antidote to discrimination, prejudice, and bias in the workplace. Unfortunately, such tolerance means that people should apply behavior as noted in figure 1; i.e., participants are asked to do one or more of the verbs listed in column 1 regarding others’ column 2 happenings and that if they don’t; then those participants may be considered one or more of the names listed in column 3. As an example, a participant may be told that if they do not appreciate or approve of gay and lesbian lifestyles they are judgmental, dogmatic and/or a homophobe.

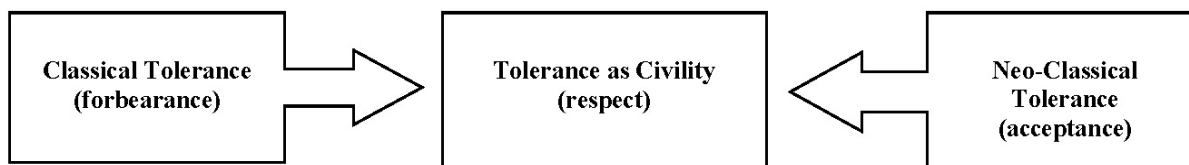
**Figure 1: Activities encouraged at many multicultural training workshops either implicitly or explicitly**



## Authentic Tolerance: The Value of Civility in Dialogue

Authentic tolerance, somewhere between the classical and neo-classical parameters, involves treating people with whom we differ, neither with appreciation, acceptance, or endorsement but with civility, dignity, and respect even as we recognize that some conflict and tension is inevitable (see Figure 1). Individuals, we feel, should be shown basic respect as human beings even if they hold beliefs that others may not value. Like Ury (1999), we believe “tolerance is ... showing respect for the essential humanity in every person” (p. 127). People do not lose their dignity because they believe implausible, even offensive, things.

Figure 2. Authentic tolerance relative to classical and neo-classical tolerance



We argue for civility toward others with whom we disagree—a civility that includes respect for others and the approval of others as a basic object of moral concern. Civility permits conflict and criticism of others’ beliefs and practices, but it limits the ways in which this conflict can be pursued based on respect for the person. For criticism to be civil, it cannot be blind, based on stereotypes or debase opposing viewpoints but rather requires knowledge and basic concern for the identity and voice of others. Fowers and Davidov (2006) suggest civility also introduces risk to one’s convictions since authentic dialogue involves an openness to others which in turn requires the willingness to allow others to call one’s own deepest beliefs and commitments into question as points of view when compared and questioned. Roberts and Lester (2006) also argue that respect can be considered a mutual quality that requires both sharing things that are important and listening to what could be considered important to others. Active engagement characteristic of authentic dialogue promotes the mutual trust that provides the foundation for social cooperation and flourishing in democratic societies. When individuals can be conditioned to be persuaded by sloganeering rather than by rational discourse, they become prepared to be taken in by any smooth talker and could lose their freedoms at the hands of charismatic tyrants.

Briefly, classical tolerance involves forbearance of others and their ideas while neo-classical tolerance preaches appreciation and acceptance of others’ ideas, behavior and beliefs. Authentic tolerance, or what we refer to as civility, involves respect and dignity of individuals without necessarily agreeing with or accepting their practices or values. Key components include dialogue and openness to others.

The richest form of dialogue should not be construed as merely an exchange of information, but rather a process in which the participants actively question their own perspectives and include the other as a partner in their cultural self-exploration and learning (Richardson, 2003). Dialogue involves self-exploration as much as learning about the other, the articulation of one's own previously implicit values and assumptions as much as learning what might be valued by the other. This kind of exchange can lead to greater self-understanding as well as a thoughtful consideration of another's perspective. It can also help one recognize and begin to address inconsistencies, tensions and blind spots in one's heritage. This kind of dialogue can be a productive way to question the values and standards of one's cultural community in light of another viewpoint. At its best, dialogue can be challenging and enriching and it results in greater clarity about and sometimes alterations in one's own worldview. Such dialogue introduces profound possibilities for self-examination and transformation in ways that members of diverse groups understand: what might be good for them, what might be praiseworthy, and how to bring that goodness into being. Cortina (2008) offers that such a procedure may provide a partial antidote to higher levels of incivility seen in our national culture today.

Of course, some may hold certain beliefs or practices so unacceptable that might be unwilling to enter a dialogue with those who keep them. Even so, the temptation to reflexively categorize alien customs and practices as contemptuous or immoral must be resisted. Such a judgment may reflect the limits of our own horizon, rather than the truth of someone else's point of view. Covey (1989), in his highly successful text, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, referred to a similar concept when he suggested, "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (p. 235). This habit can be similar to empathy and can be intended to improve communication by suggesting that individuals listen with the intent to understand the others' perspective; not listen solely with the intent to reply.

Cortina (2008) states that authentic tolerance (civility), emphasizing respect and charity, could be considered the simple etiquette of public life and can be seen as an antidote to a U.S. culture increasingly characterized by incivilities. Authentic tolerance (civility) allows differing views to have an equal right to exist, although not necessarily an equal share in truth. These are different issues. Indeed, the view that holds all values equal and immune from criticism might be intolerant of the view that moral judgments can be made. Authentic tolerance does not excuse individuals from resolving conflicting claims to truth. Can it be intolerant to claim the sun as the center of our solar system because others might think the earth to be the center of the solar system? Should scholars be considered intolerant when they believe one hypothesis true and another false?

Authentic tolerance recognizes the rights of other humans to both have and express their opinion. If individuals can learn to respect the rights of all human beings to have and express their understanding of reality, whether they agree with them or not, then everyone will be one step closer to living in a truly charitable world. Tolerance might also be called "civility" and can be equated with the word "respect." People can respect those who hold different beliefs by

treating them courteously and allowing their views a place in community discourse. Persons may strongly disagree with their ideas and vigorously contend against them in the public square but still display respect for individuals despite their differences.

Individuals can be authentically tolerant without accepting another person's beliefs. Tolerance does not mean accepting another person's belief, only his or her right to have that belief. Individuals should be inclusive of people but not necessarily personally incorporate their beliefs and behaviors. We should listen to and learn from all but we are not obligated to agree with everyone or accept their viewpoints. It can be considered a disservice to all when believing that tolerance, respect, charity and dignity imply never saying or doing anything that might upset someone. Indeed, Barrow (2005) goes so far as to say that those who protest that they are being offended by our interpretation "one of the supreme self-serving acts. Barrow (2005) offers that taking offence, when it means treating one's personal hurt as grounds for punitive response, involves a refusal to show tolerance, to allow freedom or to play fair—for why should you be allowed to say what you want, when others are denied that right by you" (p. 273)?

### **Authentic Tolerance in Other Cultures**

The conceptualization of authentic tolerance presented here can be supported by Eastern and African thinking. Asian societies, particularly countries like China, Japan, and South Korea, stress building harmonious interpersonal relationships through avoidance of conflict and compliance with social norms. Jiang (2006) found the atmosphere of harmony in the teachings of Confucius for whom tolerance implies *harmony without conformity*. Lo (2006) states that a true Confucianist or Confucianism-inspired person would graciously show tolerance for differences in beliefs and values for the sake of harmony based on benevolence and love but not necessarily feel obligated to accept and endorse such beliefs and values. Similarly, Kani, (2006) describes the concept of *ubuntu* and how it has become woven into the fabric of African society. Ubuntu represents a collection of values for treating others with harmony, respect, sensitivity, dignity, and collective unity simply because of a person's humanness. The ubuntu value system provides a framework of how people should treat others and values a collective respect for everyone in the system.

An imperative delineated from the above can be that it remains important to treat others as family, i.e., with kindness, compassion, and humility. Indeed, Mangalisco (2001) noted that "Treat[ing] others with dignity and respect ... is a cardinal point of *ubuntu*. Everything hinges on this canon, including an emphasis on humility, harmony, and valuing diversity" (p. 32).

We offer these African-and Asian-based principles to be clearly consistent and present a strong argument for authentic tolerance. As such, there could be important implications of authentic tolerance for cross-cultural managerial practice. Managers in charge of multinational firms with operations in African or Asian countries would be well-advised to take heed of the

proposed concept of authentic tolerance and develop their corporate diversity programs accordingly.

What society calls for cannot be considered endurance of the odious nor acceptance of the objectionable but rather civility in debate and deliberation over different and often opposing points of view that allow for diverse perspectives to be shared, for complex issues to be discussed thoughtfully, and for challenging topics to be explored without resorting to invective and personal attacks. The founders of our nation valued the kind of gentle behavior all too often absent from our current public conduct. There exists a clear historical record showing George Washington studied civility. As a teen, Washington copied into a school workbook “110 Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation.” The first of Washington’s rules of civility said, “Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present” (Washington & Brookhiser, 1971, p. 1). Civility should not be considered a philosophical abstraction but rather, a code of decency to be applied in everyday life. Civility can be considered important because it helps bring about social cooperation and essential for bridging social capital to operate in modern society.

Billante and Saunders (2002) surveyed the growing literature on civility and suggested three elements that together constitute civility. The first element is respect for others, or in Shils’ words (1997) “Civility is basically respect for the dignity and the desire for dignity of other persons” (p. 338). Similarly, Calhoun (2000) sees civility as “the common language for communicating respect for one another” (p. 255). The second element is civility as public behavior towards strangers. This is similar to Carters’ (1998) view that “civility equips us for everyday life with strangers ... we need neither to love them nor to hate them in order to be civil towards them” (p. 58). The third element is self-regulation in the sense that it requires empathy by putting one’s own immediate self-interest in the context of the larger common good and acting accordingly (Billante & Saunders, 2002).

Good people will sincerely disagree and the issues that divide us by their very nature impassion us. We can, however, disagree without demonizing the person with whom we disagree. In civility we affirm the dignity and essential worth of the other person, even when the other person expresses ideas we find disagreeable. Tolerance in civil discourse involves the respectful exchange of information, values, interests, and positions, and can be considered a necessary predicate for creative problem solving and democratic governance that involves communicating in ways that will foster dialog, conversation, and legitimate debate. Tolerance does not require people to change their values, but provides an environment where all points of view can be heard and acknowledged and free from vitriolic attacks. Tolerance involves acceptance and affirmation of others even as we disagree with their beliefs, values, or ways of conduct. Opposing others’ plans and ideas should not mean whipping up personalized attack-based hysteria. We understand that not all issues can find compromise solutions or common ground (e.g., abortion) but that does not justify engaging in harsh, vilifying, and over-the-top rhetoric.

Unfortunately, the recent plunge to new depths of *incivility*—insensitive, impolite, disrespectful, or rude behavior directed at another person that displays a lack of regard for that person (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001)—appears to have quite the opposite effect as increasing levels of boorishness steal dignity, humanity, and empathy from people. Incivility can often be found in society and in the workplace, and many believe it to be a serious and worsening problem (US News/Bozell Survey 1996). Pearson and Porath (2005), for example, found that 10% of approximately 800 sampled U.S. employees report witnessing incivility daily; 20% claim to be targets of workplace incivility at least once per week. Across studies of 9,000 employees, Pearson and Porath (2009) found that 96% of sampled employees experienced, while 99% witnessed incivility in the workplace. In August, 2010 Rasmussen Reports found 69 percent of Americans believe their countrymen are “becoming more rude and less civilized.” A more comprehensive April 2010 poll by Weber Shandwick revealed that 94 percent of respondents considered the general tone and level of civility in the country to be a problem. Nearly three-quarters of respondents believe the level of incivility increased over the past few years (Rodriguez, 2011).

This level of discourteousness fueled the creation of several civility improvement institutes including the Workplace Bullying Institute (n.d.), the Civility Institute (n.d.) at Johns Hopkins University, and the newly created National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD; n.d.), established in February, 2011 at the University of Arizona. The NICD, with honorary chairs Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, stands as a national, nonpartisan center for debate, research, education and policy generation regarding civic engagement and civility and constructive engagement in public discourse where discussion and vigorous debate can take place in a polite manner. One of the key goals of the institute assists in connecting people with diverse viewpoints and offers a venue for vigorous and respectful debate while allowing for structured dialogue and deliberation. This approach ensures all points of view are expressed and heard, and although does not expect people to change their values or perspectives, inspires the search for more informed and creative decision-making. We believe that tolerance understood as civility can be a useful tool utilized by the NICD.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Tolerance once meant that a person must be willing to put up with behaviors they found objectionable. Then it came to mean not judging such behaviors but rather respect them. Today, it could mean celebrating them. Researchers (Lickona, 2002; McDowell & Hostetler, 1998) increasingly question the rhetoric of the currently defined tolerance in its neo-classical definition. If diversity training and awareness programs designed to promote social understanding (inclusion, affirmation, and harmony) in a pluralistic world should continue to do the good work of confronting and eliminating unlawful and immoral discrimination and prejudice, then a key

tool in such programs, teaching tolerance emphasizing acceptance of, agreement with, and endorsement of all beliefs and behaviors, must receive a more considered evaluation.

Authentic tolerance as incorporating dignity and respect for individuals without necessarily sharing in or accepting others' beliefs and behavior must supplant the classical and neo-classical views. Individuals can be authentically tolerant without the requirement to internalize others' thinking or convictions. Inclusiveness should not demand that differences be denied. Authentic tolerance employs respect and civility for persons since every person possesses inherent value, but does not require adopting another person's belief, only affirming his or her right to have that belief. It does not require us to accept what we tolerate or pass by what we tolerate in respectful silence. It strongly encourages us to explore the terrain between forbearance and acceptance, exploring possibilities of mutual understanding and accommodation along the way.

We support the idea of a truly pluralistic society where differing views have an equal and legal right to exist but not a society where ideologically driven interest groups require all to accept their worldviews, where disagreement can be misconstrued as bigotry, stupidity, and hatred, and where tolerance simply means forced acceptance. We are reminded of the words of noted English philosopher William Rowe who said: "... those who are most eloquent in demanding freedom for their own views and practices are the first to deny freedom of thought or action to their neighbours" (1930).

We hold a vision of a world that features cultural sensitivity, mutual understanding and affirmation, inclusion, social justice; and the reduction and elimination of prejudice, inequality, discrimination, and oppression—without forced acceptance and agreement associated with the neo-classical definition of tolerance, and without the endurance and forbearance incorporated in the classical meaning of tolerance. We agree with Dubos (1981) that social evolution proceeds most rapidly when different cultures and groups "... come into close contact with each other and thus can exchange information and goods, even though each retains its originality," (p. 116) and would expand his words by advocating approaching others with respect, dignity, and charity due them as human beings. In an intolerant world, rational dialogue gives way to argument by insult. It could be easier to hurl an insult—"you intolerant bigot"—than to confront the idea and either refute it or be changed by it. Today in some cases, tolerance actually reflects intolerance. When thoughtful principled arguments can be refuted by insults or speculation about hidden motives, rational discourse breaks down.

Weissberg (2008) suggests that those attending diversity workshops that encourage tolerance should respectfully engage trainers regarding their definition of tolerance and to question interpretations that imply that participants should appreciate all differences and "accept everything" (p. x). We agree with Bennett (2001) that "Properly understood, tolerance means treating people with respect and without malice; it does not require us to dissolve social norms or to weaken our commitment to ancient and honorable beliefs" (p. 138). Such an understanding of tolerance, what we refer to as authentic tolerance or civility can enhance diversity training



program effectiveness and can be a valuable approach to addressing inclusion in organizations and institutions. Tolerating or respecting people, however, must never be confused with accepting all their ideas and practices.

Tolerance as civility will require new measures of tolerance. As usually defined by social scientists, tolerance refers to the willingness to extend basic rights and civil liberties to persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own (Gibson & Bingham, 1982) and typically can be measured by items such as Stouffer's (1955) support for "a communist making a speech in your community." People can be labeled intolerant provided that they advocate any restriction of political acts that are otherwise permissible under law. Our view of tolerance suggests that more appropriate measures of tolerance may be derived from the growing literature in psychology and sociology addressing civility and incivilities.

The authors offer a three-part prescription for workplace tolerance. First, managers need to develop an understanding that tolerance does not mean acceptance. Individuals do not have to discard strongly held personal beliefs, whether based on religion or some other criteria and replace them with beliefs which some could consider unacceptable. Second, employees generally should tolerate the views of others, at least to the extent of non-discrimination. Discriminatory practices can not only be morally wrong, but in addition open businesses up to legal issues. Finally, just as European leaders acknowledge the failure of multiculturalism in their countries business leaders must recognize that in order to achieve common goals, workers must practice tolerance and civility toward one another.

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