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**Global Business
Perspectives**

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**RODNEY A. OGLESBY
MARJORIE G. ADAMS**

EDITORS

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PREFACE

This volume contains an extensive summary of many of the papers presented at the Twenty-First Annual Conference of the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) held in St. Louis, Missouri, April 2 - April 4, 2009. This volume is part of the continuing effort of IABD to make available current research findings and other contributions to practitioners and academics.

The International Academy of Business Disciplines was established in 1988 as a world-wide, not-for-profit organization, to foster and promote education in all of the functional and support disciplines of business. The objectives of IABD are to stimulate learning and increase awareness of business problems and opportunities in the international marketplace and to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The IABD hopes to create an environment in which learning, teaching, research, and the practice of management, marketing and the other functional areas of business will be advanced. The main focus is on unifying and extending knowledge in these areas to ultimately create integrating theory that spans cultural boundaries. Membership in the IABD is open to scholars, practitioners, public policy makers, and concerned citizens who are interested in advancing knowledge in the various business disciplines and related fields.

The IABD has evolved into a strong global organization since its establishment, due to immense support provided by many dedicated individuals and institutions. The objectives and far-reaching visions of the IABD have created interest and excitement among people from all over the world.

The Academy is indebted to all those responsible for this year's Conference, particularly, Carolyn Ashe, University of Texas, Downtown, who served as Program Chair, and to those who served as active track chairs. Those individuals did an excellent job of coordinating the review process and organizing the sessions. A special thanks also goes to the IABD officers and Board of Directors for their continuing dedication to this conference.

Our appreciation also extends to the authors of papers presented in the conference. The high quality of papers submitted for presentation attests to the Academy's growing reputation, and provides the means for publishing this current volume.

The editors would like to extend their personal thanks to Dr. Robert Wyatt, Director of the Breech School of Business, Drury University and Dr. Otis A. Thomas, Dean of the School of Business and Management, Morgan State University for their support.

Rodney A. Oglesby
Marjorie G. Adams

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SUPPORTING GENUINE TOLERANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Promoting tolerance has become a key weapon in battling prejudice and bias in multicultural training but has had its meaning hijacked over the last generation. Tolerance has changed from its classical definition as incorporating grudging forbearance and indifference toward others and their beliefs and practices to the neo-classical meaning as suggesting that every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle, and truth claims are equally valid and worthy of acceptance. Such change has alienated many who value equality and fairness and may have limited the effectiveness of diversity initiatives because they find the new definition of tolerance to be intolerable. The authors offer authentic tolerance, incorporating respect, dignity, and openness to others, not necessarily their values or beliefs, as an alternative.

I. INTRODUCTION

“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.”

—Bennett, 2001, p. 138

A social reality of contemporary American life is that it is diverse, multicultural, and pluralistic. Americans live with a multifaceted variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, ages, behaviors, beliefs, religions, practices, lifestyles, commitments—and this heterogeneity is still developing. Such differences have led historically to increased levels of prejudice, bigotry, ethnocentrism, segregation, and reduced levels of cohesiveness and communication among groups and between individuals (Leonard & Levine, 2003). In response to such discrimination and other forms of social isolation and exclusion numerous cultural diversity and multicultural development programs have been implemented to address individuals' natural ethnocentricity (Fiske, 1998) and the naturally powerful loyalty toward peoples' own culture (Fowers, 2001). In such training initiatives it is common to hear that such demographic mixtures are praiseworthy, non-exclusionary, liberating, and positive, and that individuals should recognize and acknowledge such differences and be inclusive and open to differences and value, embrace, and celebrate them (e.g., Greenberg & Baron, 2008). Trainees are advised to appreciate, respect, accept, and approve diverging opinions, views, and ways of life (Nieto, 1996). If society is to optimize opportunities and strengths, minimize weaknesses and threats, and create a climate that affirms all members then it must encourage understanding and *tolerance* (Pless & Maak, 2004). However the value of tolerance has not always been appreciated and considered honorable. No great faith-based belief system or Roman or Samurai principles mention tolerance. The word

tolerance never even appeared until the 1960's and 1970's when the New American Standard and New International versions of the Bible came into being (Proctor, 2002). In the King James and original American Standard versions the word used was "forbearance" which implies something altogether different. Early Western religious scholars such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas viewed tolerance as a vice that can corrupt society and harm innocent people (Colesante & Biggs, 1999). Only within the last generation has tolerance risen to the apex of America's public moral philosophy. "It has been hailed as one of the fundamental ethical and political values and it still occupies a powerful position in contemporary legal and political rhetoric" (Heyd, 1996, p. 4). Today, it is believed that a good, moral person is, above all, tolerant (Tolerance.org, n. d.).

Tolerance is imperfectly understood and somewhat paradoxical because it characterizes as honorable putting up with things that one believes are wrong or suspect (Horton, 1996). Thus, this paper posits that tolerance means as individuals we may respect different values yet need not embrace all values as our own. After providing definitions of tolerance, both traditional and new, a presentation of intolerance and political elite relabeling is offered, followed by a discussion of tolerance and the value of genuine dialogue. The paper concludes with a summary that emphasizes respect and dignity of others rather than required acceptance and agreement of others' beliefs and values.

II. MEANINGS OF TOLERANCE

The origin of the word is the Latin *tolerare*, which means to bear or endure, suffering through without action in response (Odell, n. d.). This meaning was continued in *Webster's Dictionary* (Gove, 2002) initial definition of the term as involving a capacity to endure with pain or hardship—fortitude, stamina, forbearance and restraint. Thus, tolerance meant putting up with something one found objectionable. In other words, something repugnant or offensive is allowed to exist without significant action on the part of those to whom it is odious.

Webster's secondary meaning of tolerance defined it as a permissive or liberal attitude toward beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own. This is the dominant view of tolerance today (McDowell & Hostetler, 1998; Odell, n. d.). Thus, the idea of tolerance has undergone a gradual change in definition over the years from the obligation not to tolerate the immoral to the requirement to accept the legitimacy of the morally different. It has been largely redefined by those seeking to broaden what it means to endure while diminishing that which is defined as offensive, distasteful, and objectionable. Consistent with these definitional changes Apel (1997) proposed 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) maintained that negative tolerance with its emphasis on obligations to refrain from interfering with other people's traditions or opinions was not enough within a pluralistic, multicultural society. Although some authors have used this negative-positive definition of tolerance (Moore, Petrow, Hebrink, & Lee, 2007), to avoid such clearly prejudicial wording in this paper the terms "classical" and "neo-classical" tolerance are used.

Classical Definition of Tolerance

Traditionally tolerance incorporated the idea that everyone was entitled to their own opinion and that people were to recognize and respect others' beliefs, practices, etc., without

necessarily agreeing or sympathizing or sharing in them, and to bear or put up with someone or something not especially liked (McDowell & Hostetler, 2005). Within this view individuals accept the right of others to hold differing opinions, have different lifestyles, and be different than themselves—while not accepting their behavior as right for themselves or society. Classic tolerance respects and accepts individuals without necessarily approving of or participating in their beliefs, values, or behavior. Respect for the viewpoints and practices of others is not the same as agreement or moral endorsement. It means the ability to hold on to one's convictions while accepting the right of others to hold on to theirs. Tolerance is not acquiescence, but recognition of difference.

Neo-classical Definition of Tolerance

More recent American understandings of tolerance, however, promise members of minority and marginalized groups something more: *acceptance* and *agreement* with their beliefs and practices in order to help them maintain the essentials of their identities and ways of life, and to help them to feel welcome and comfortable in the societies where they live (Walzer, 1997). The neo-classical tolerance asks citizens to be open-minded and empathetic toward differences; it asks them to work sympathetically to build institutional and cultural arrangements that will accommodate different ways of life (Mendus, 1987). Tolerance has evolved from abiding the objectionable to affirming the rightness of the nonconventional and nontraditional. Mistaking toleration for affirmation was made in the United Nation's (UN) decision to declare 1995 "The Year of Tolerance." In the UN's declaration, tolerance was defined 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).

III. INTOLERANCE

In the lexicon of neo-classical tolerance, respecting an individual means accepting and approving their ideals, beliefs, behaviors, and practices. One of the worst things that can be said of a person today is that he or she is intolerant. Calling someone intolerant helps demonize a particular, social, ethnic, cultural, or religious group, and faulting their worldview as the most basic, most primary cause of their perceived prejudice. A person who is intolerant is often called biased, bigoted, and dogmatic (*Roget's*, 2005) as well as sexist, classist, homophobic, and misogynistic. In sum, an intolerant individual is not a good person.

Must people approve and agree with others' beliefs, values, and lifestyle? To disapprove of such things is to risk being branded narrow-minded, oppressive, and intolerant. Additionally, those who are intolerant are said to be ignorant, divisive, judgmental, self-righteous, mean-spirited, and prejudiced. They are labeled ideologues and hate mongers—deplorable persons worthy of censure. Those who hold principles and firmly held beliefs are considered legalistic individuals with non-negotiable doctrinal convictions.

Yet, not *all* beliefs and behavior must be accepted. The phenomenon of tolerance is almost universally recognized by both critics and supporters as central to the liberal tradition (Murphy, 1997) and, for the most part, only those principles, sentiments, ideas, and political attitudes approved by the shrill and intrusive cultural and political intelligentsia with their aura of self-assured moral and intellectual superiority must be endorsed. Even raising questions about

such dogma can be problematic as Harvard University president Lawrence Summers found out after he speculated about differences in scientific ability between men and women (Mansfield, 2006). These elites 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” (Bennett, 1994, p. 26), and are more powerful than their numbers would normally allow because they are looked upon as trend setters and opinion makers in areas such as moral values, political principles, fundamental ideas, and important truths.

IV. FRAMING AND REFRAMING

Such pundits garner public support in large part because of their ability to frame and reframe public discussion (Hunter, 2006). Hunter (2006) notes, for example, the tendency of the cognoscenti to swoop into local controversies (e.g., the “morning after” pill), galvanize the population and use the disputes to promote their own interests. The general population is not as polarized as these activists, but the power of the intelligentsia is made even greater by the public’s inability to challenge their stark and oftentimes uncompromising framing and reframing of issues (Hunter, 2006).

Framing involves more than simply taking positions or arguments about an issue. It involves *constructing* an issue (e.g., affirmative action, welfare, nuclear power): it spells out the essence of the problem, suggests how it should be thought about, and may go so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done (Entman, 1993). Take homosexuality for instance. The term has been referred to as a sin, a disease, a lifestyle, a preference, and a sexual orientation. Just by describing this topic in different terms an entirely different connotation is given to what is homosexuality. This has not occurred by accident. Thus, framing/reframing involves advocates’ attempts to impose their own meaning on matters of political and moral import (Gamson, 1992). Partisan pundits wage a war of frames because they know that if their frame becomes the dominant way of thinking then the battle for public opinion has been won (Manheim, 1991).

The power of framing and reframing, as an influence technique, is central in our culture. In classic stories and films such as “It’s a Wonderful Life” and “A Christmas Carol” the key character is led to rethink his or her approach to life by seeing it through a different frame of reference—one in which the consequences of the current frame is brought to light for them. In the movies, “*Dead Poet’s Society*” and “*Stand and Deliver*”, in different ways the teachers reframe the process of learning to their student audiences (Brown & Murti, 2004).

V. AUTHENTIC TOLERANCE: ON THE VALUE OF CHARITY, RESPECT, AND DIGNITY IN DIALOGUE

While at times it may be proper to engage in wordsmithing, spin doctoring, or framing/reframing (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), a generally more appropriate action would be to affectively and cognitively engage in dialogue with someone who is different or believes differently. Authentic tolerance, somewhere between the classical and neo-classical definitions, involves treating people with whom we differ neither with indifference or endurance nor appreciation or acceptance but with civility, dignity, and respect even as it is recognized that some conflict and tension is inevitable. Individuals should be shown a basic respect as human

beings even if they hold beliefs many people may not respect. People do not lose their dignity because they believe implausible, even offensive, things.

The authors argue, as does Hallemeier (2006), for charity toward others with whom there is disagreement—a charity that includes respect for the other and the acceptance of the other person as a basic object of moral concern. Charity 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 (Swanton, 2003).

The authentic tolerance suggested here, emphasizing respect and charity is the simple etiquette of public life that helps maintain the dignity of people and is crucial to citizens' quality of life. Authentic tolerance allows differing views to have an equal right to exist, not necessarily an equal share in truth. These are different issues. Is it intolerant to claim that the sun is the center of our solar system because others might think that it is the earth? Are scholars considered intolerant when they believe one hypothesis to be true and another false?

Individuals can be authentically tolerant without accepting another's beliefs—only the right of others to have those beliefs. Denying differences does no one any favors while acknowledging the possibility of disagreement gives people the freedom to challenge others with whom they differ. Individuals should be inclusive of people but not necessarily their beliefs and behaviors. People should listen to and learn from all, but are not obligated to agree with all. It is sad when it is believed that tolerance, respect, and charity imply never saying or doing anything that might upset someone. Indeed, Barrow (2005) goes so far as to say that those who indicate that they are being offended by an interpretation “is one of the supreme self-serving acts. 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” (Barrow, 2005, p. 273)?

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Historically, the classical view of tolerance involved grudging endurance and simply allowing differing viewpoints without necessarily agreeing with them. It was not a particularly noteworthy quality but tolerance is now considered the supreme virtue of U.S. society (Hallemeier, 2006) and one of the few non-controversial values today (Kreeft, 2007). Nearly everyone in American society accepts the significance of tolerance. It is a powerful selling point for any theory or practice that can claim it. Nowhere is this more evident than the prominence given tolerance in education and training programs addressing issues of diversity (Vogt, 1997).

The ascendance of tolerance occurred as its definition was hijacked by partisan pundits who wanted to downplay differences and emphasize impartiality across a number of dimensions, from equality of races, sexes, ages, ethnic groups to equality of beliefs, values, practices, behaviors, and lifestyles. Disagreement with such opinions leads to accusations and charges of intolerance. Cultural restraints and traditions of mutual respect and common decency that allowed individuals to debate civilly among themselves, despite their diversity, are fast disappearing.

Authentic tolerance as incorporating dignity and respect for individuals without necessarily sharing in or appreciating others' beliefs and behavior must supplant the classical and neo-classical views. Individuals can be truly tolerant without accepting others' thinking or convictions. Inclusiveness should not demand that differences be denied. Authentic tolerance employs respect and dignity for the person but does not require accepting another person's

belief, only his or her right to have that belief. Just because a good Nazi thinks genocide is right does not make it so. Similarly, must all agree with a child molester who claims that within his or her belief system having sex with a child is an acceptable thing to do?

The proponents of the neo-classical view of tolerance argue that individuals are free to believe whatever they like; they should just keep it private. Rather than keeping beliefs private, however, the authors agree with sociologist S. D. Gaede who said, “I cannot be mute about my convictions. . . . It is precisely those convictions that committed me to truth and justice in the first place” (1993, p. 54). Authentic tolerance does not mean the acceptance and endorsement of all human behaviors; there are intolerable behaviors, meant to ruin indeed the very expression of tolerance, such as the propagandas of the fascist or racist types.

All citizens—not necessarily their beliefs, behavior, or values—should be accorded equal respect in their pursuit of their idea of the good. The idea of a truly pluralistic society where differing views have an equal and legal right to exist should be vigorously pursued, but not a society where ideologically driven interest groups and political and cultural elites require all to accept their worldviews and where disagreement is misconstrued as bigotry, stupidity, and hatred, and where tolerance simply means forced acceptance. The words of noted English philosopher William Rowe are fitting: “. . . 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).

Finally, it is worth noting that our conceptualization of authentic tolerance is supported by Eastern philosophical thinking. Asian societies, particularly countries like China, Japan, and South Korea, stress building harmonious interpersonal relationships through avoidance of conflict, deference to authority, and compliance with social norms. This is based on the teachings of Confucius for whom tolerance implies harmony without conformity (Jiang, 2006). This Confucianism-based principle is clearly consistent with authentic tolerance advocated in this paper. As such, there are important implications of authentic tolerance for cross-cultural managerial practice. Managers in charge of multinational firms with operations in Asian countries traditionally influenced by Confucianism would be well-advised to take heed of the proposed concept of authentic tolerance and develop their corporate diversity programs accordingly.

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