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What do diversity and inclusion, book banning, and moral ecology all have in common?

This spring, the Ethics Newsletter gets deep into the heart of some important ethical topics, with articles on each of these topics that influence our daily lives and center around the importance of diversity. Read on for a refresher on what diversity and inclusion really means (and why it matters), a perspective on implications of recent book banning, and how to bolster our moral thinking.

Diversity and Inclusion Gets a Seat at the Table

By Ashley Salaiz, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Management;
Co-Director of Center for Ethics

Whether you are a student or an employee, you likely have been hearing more and more about diversity and inclusion over the past few years. But what exactly does it mean, and why is it important? Diversity, in its simplest form, is variety. In the workplace, the goal is to have diverse employees in terms of observable factors, like gender, race, ethnicity, age and disability as well as diversity of thought and experiences. Inclusion, on the other hand, indicates that employees are involved, engaged and empowered. When combined, a diverse and inclusive workplace means a wide variety of employees have an equal opportunity to contribute, participate, develop and grow. Diversity may look like a workplace having both genders represented equally (50/50), but inclusion means women are also represented in management roles.

Why are diversity and inclusion important? While diversity and inclusion have always been important, organizations are doing a better job over the past

few years in making actionable changes, and the benefits are undeniable.

For example, employees at diverse and inclusive workplaces report having more trust in their employer, feel more pride about the work they do, and stay committed to the company. With employee retention comes lower turnover costs. Diverse and inclusive workplaces also generate more innovative ideas and are better able to recruit new talent. And when a company has a diverse pool of committed and trusting employees, customers feel more connected. All of these benefits mean company costs decrease while revenues increase. If you find yourself interviewing for a new role, even as a first job after college, make sure that diversity and inclusion are given their seat at the table.



Ashley Salaiz, Ph.D.

Reading Is Only Dangerous If You Do It Right

By **Paul T. Corrigan, Ph.D.**, Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Writing

In January, less than an hour away from The University of Tampa, a group called County Citizens Defending Freedom got 16 books pulled from all the middle and high school libraries in Polk County—including Noble-Prize-winner Toni Morrison’s novels *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, heartbreaking-yet-hopeful stories set during slavery and Jim Crow. Such attacks on books are sweeping the U.S. lately, dressed in concerns about “decency,” “discomfort,” and even, in one Tennessee book burning, “demons.” But often the clear target is diversity. In the Polk County incident, while Morrison purportedly must be banned for depicting sexual violence, Shakespeare does not, even though he does the same. The spokesperson

for County Citizens Defending Freedom insisted the difference was “clear.” Indeed, it is.

Thankfully, at the same time, there are folks across the country defending, buying, reading, assigning, and giving away diverse books. In Polk County, school librarians and the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People have already spoken up. But it occurs to me that supporters of diverse books and the banners and burners do share something in common. We all appear to agree that diverse books affect readers, move us, even influence how we think and feel. To those defending a homogenous status



Paul T. Corrigan, PhD

quo, that power is dangerous. But to those who value encountering and being challenged by the perspectives and experiences of others, especially marginalized others, it is “good trouble, necessary trouble,” in the words of former U.S. Rep. John Lewis.

However, my studies of reading show me that the equation is not that simple. Diverse books can be “dangerous” or “troubling” but are not automatically so. So much depends on how the books are read. In addition to making sure everyone can access diverse books, in school and elsewhere, we have got to read and to encourage students and others to read in “dangerous” and “troubling” ways. Merely turning the pages and looking at the words will not suffice. The reading must be active, introspective and empathetic. We’ve got to really work to engage the texts, challenge ourselves, and understand diversity in order to see change.

Ethics and Moral Ecology for the Classroom

By **Carter Hardy, Ph.D.**, Assistant Teaching Professor of Philosophy

Students are always quick to identify empathy as an important aspect of our moral psychology. Especially in fields like medicine, empathy is an important moral response to others that enables understanding. This ranges from a basic curiosity about the other’s perspective to more complex, narrative understandings of the other’s perspective.

A large part of the work on my Professional Development Award through The University of Tampa has included researching the ways to improve self-reflection on this and other parts of our moral psychology. Specifically, I have compiled a compendium of cases and narratives to help students reflect on their own thinking, feeling and valuing. They read and engage with moral problems from diverse perspectives. They

use worksheets and trackers to organize their application of theories, values and arguments. But this is not enough. The moral landscape of the world is not like that of the classroom, and students also need to learn to recognize and cultivate their own moral ecologies. Moral ecology is the way that our environment is set up—by ourselves and by others—to hinder or enable moral behavior. This can be as global as our societal structures that privilege some while oppressing others, or as local as the friends we surround ourselves with who support or mock our moral choices. Especially with moral emotions like empathy, the surrounding moral ecology is inseparable from the moral agent because it has such a significant impact on one’s ability to empathize.

For this brief article, I can summarize two quick insights from my research. Ethics courses should teach (1) the mindful construction of space using notes, reminders, and heuristics to encourage moral behavior; and (2) the construction of moral communities that will encourage moral behavior and help one develop into a responsible moral agent. Quick worksheets can be developed for courses to help accomplish the first task. The second task can be accomplished with classroom activities that teach students how to form communities with diverse others outside of the classroom. Together, these can be intertwined with everyday decision-making to bolster our moral thinking, feeling and valuing.



Carter Hardy, PhD

Followup: Fall 2021 Center for Ethics Hot Seat Speaker Series Featuring Michael Hurwitz

By **Jordan Hurwitz**, Staff Assistant I, Sykes College of Business

Restaurateur Michael Hurwitz, franchiser of the national chain Uno Pizzeria and Grill, discussed ethics in the hospitality industry at the recent Center for Ethics Hot Seat event.

With over 35 years of experience, Hurwitz regaled the crowd with industry issues and experiences. Topics discussed ranged from restaurant regulation, workplace romances, to navigating working with people of all different backgrounds. Among the many questions posed by the audience,

one asked Hurwitz to reflect on what the most important career lesson he learned, to which the speaker responded “not sweat the small stuff.”

Many college students either currently work or have worked within the hospitality industry. The Center for Ethics aims to host events that engage students and speak to their interests. The Fall 2021 Hot Seat Speaker Series was geared toward providing students the opportunity to hear from someone with decades of experience within

the hospitality industry. Multiple students stayed after the event to introduce themselves to the featured speaker and ask insightful questions about careers in hospitality. One student told the speaker that he hopes to be a restaurateur as well and was thankful for the insights provided during the discussion.

Students and faculty alike enjoyed the interactive discussion about the hospitality industry. The Hot Seat Speaker Series seeks to spark a broader conversation on ethics across all industries and disciplines.



Jordan Hurwitz

Diversity and Inclusion: A Student’s Perspective

By **Jordan Hurwitz**, Staff Assistant I, Sykes College of Business

The importance of diversity and inclusion goes beyond the workplace; it begins in the classroom. Gershom Vacarizas is a UT graduate assistant from the department of Linguistics who completed his MBA in May 2021 and is currently pursuing his MS in Marketing degree. Read on to learn more about his perspective on diversity and inclusion.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

It’s very important to have diversity and inclusion, as it helps us gain new perspectives, and in turn be more well informed about different cultures and backgrounds. As an international student, it helps to know that these perspectives are welcome, as well as possibly making connections with those

that may share those same backgrounds as myself.

UT enrolls students from 50 states and most of the world’s countries. Do you think this benefits your learning in the classroom? Why or why not?

Yes. Class discussions are more engaging and thorough. It is interesting to hear about how concepts may be relatable to someone from a different background with their unique life experiences.

How have you seen inclusion in the classroom?

In group projects, each team is comprised of students from different countries. All students

were encouraged to speak about their experiences in class discussions, and as the semester progressed, students who speak English as a second language felt more welcome to speak their minds about the subject matter.

Why do you think it is important to have a diverse and inclusive culture in an academic setting?

It’s important to recognize there is no “right” perspective, and there are multiple ways of addressing learning concepts and real-life business problems. I like the potential conflict of how one school of thought may oppose another, yet how from both perspectives they appear “correct.”

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Diversity and Inclusion: A Student's Perspective

Share a time where you learned something interesting from a classmate that has stuck with you.

Growing up, I was always primed to build an academic and professional career in the U.S., especially after finishing my master's degree. In casual conversation, it was interesting to learn about how another international student viewed the purpose of his higher education in the U.S.

differently. From his upbringing, he recognized the value that a U.S. degree has in his home country, and his sole purpose of being in the U.S. was to obtain a master's degree. Then, his plan was to go home and utilize the degree in his home country, rather than working to stay in the U.S., which is recognized as a land of opportunity amongst many other international peers.

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