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# Enhancing the Effects of Diversity Awareness Training: A Review of the Research Literature



Jennifer G. Myers  
Civil Aeromedical Institute  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73125

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16. Abstract The projected changes in the demographic makeup of the workforce were primary influences in the spread of diversity awareness training in the private and public sector. One approach to training aims at changing personal attitudes and values to effect positive changes in treatment of others different from oneself (especially protected groups) in the workplace. The effectiveness of training or other interventions that focus on changes in attitudes to change behavior has not been clearly demonstrated. Training interventions need to use a combination of methods or strategies before, during, and after training to enhance the measurable benefits received from diversity awareness training and avoid the potential for "white male backlash" and psychological risk among participants. Implementation of a training evaluation plan and a research program for identifying characteristics of effective training are also necessary to enhance training effectiveness in the longer term.					
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# ENHANCING THE EFFECTS OF DIVERSITY AWARENESS TRAINING: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

Projections of the demographic makeup of workers in the future (Johnston & Packer, 1987) and the increasing globalization of the marketplace have been primary motivators behind the public and private sector implementation of diversity training programs (c.f., Jackson & Associates, 1992; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1993). Karp and Sutton (1993) identified two predominant approaches in diversity training: (1) a focus on the rules and regulations of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs and the need for compliance and (2) increasing individual sensitivity to differences and awareness of operating biases (referred to as diversity awareness training throughout the rest of the review). Whereas the former approach concentrates on legal and regulatory means to achieving representation of targeted groups, the latter approach focuses on personal values and attitudes that may affect how one treats others in the workplace who are different from oneself (e.g., gender, race). Because of the sensitive and potentially volatile nature of discussing personal prejudices and the experience of prejudice in mixed groups during diversity awareness training, some concerns about its use have been raised in the private and public sectors (Kaufman, 1994).

One concern involves the potential for backlash among training participants. That is, diversity awareness training may backfire, causing greater polarization between different groups and reinforcing the attitudes that were targeted for change (Caudron, 1993; Karp & Sutton, 1993; Mobley & Payne, 1992). The problems associated with white male backlash to diversity awareness training programs have received coverage from the popular media as well. A New York Times article on diversity training in the Washington State Ferry System reported the training led to ridicule and cynicism among training participants, as well as fear of being accused of discrimination or sexual harassment in the course of directing work activities or conversing with coworkers (Egan, 1993). The

Washington State Ferry System also experienced an increase in the number of complaints of improper behavior and lawsuits following the training. Business Week recently reported that white male backlash was sufficiently problematic in some large corporations to cause the development of new programs targeted at white males (Galen & Palmer, 1994). While proponents of the Washington State Ferry System diversity awareness training consider the backlash to be a part of the inevitable turmoil associated with organizational change, others in the diversity training field identify training that is poorly conceived, designed, and implemented as being the culprit (Delatte & Baytos, 1993; Karp & Sutton, 1993).

Another concern is that there may be some psychological risk for the participants associated with the emotionally loaded topics under discussion (Gordon, 1993). Psychological risk in diversity awareness training can occur, for example, when individuals are asked to share past experiences of racism or sexism that were painful and unresolved or when the training reveals negative information about oneself or one's situation (Guteck & Koss, 1993; Reichard, Siewers, & Rodenhauser, 1992). Reichard et al. (1992) state that being a minority of any kind (e.g., single, old, female) in an emotionally intense training group can lead to distress reactions.

This report broadly reviews training and experiential learning research literature to identify ways of enhancing diversity awareness training and minimizing the potential for backlash and adverse psychological effects. The review is broken down into four component parts. In the first section of the report, experiential training that includes significant emotional events as a way of increasing self-awareness is examined for its effectiveness in creating behavior change. In addition, the paper takes a broader look at the role of attitudes in behavior change and how those research findings apply to understanding the effects of experiential learning.

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The second section of the paper addresses options or gradations in experiential training methods that may contribute to the achievement of training goals in general. The selection of experiential training activities is briefly reviewed, as well as differences in experiential learning environments. Characteristics of the trainer, the trainee, and the conduct of training that is thought to influence the effectiveness of training are also described. Finally, activities that enhance the transfer of training back to the job and their importance in the success of training are briefly presented.

The third section of the report incorporates the results of a diversity awareness training evaluation conducted by the author (Myers, 1993) in the context of research literature on experiential learning. Available information on multicultural and race awareness training is used to identify important issues to consider in providing experiential diversity training in the future.

Recommendations for minimizing potential risk associated with experiential diversity training are presented in the fourth section of the report. This section also includes suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of diversity training, as well as a proposed framework for assessing the impact of diversity training on learning and business objectives.

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING IN ACHIEVING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE**

#### **What is Experiential Training?**

When used in the workplace, the term training refers to the development of skills, knowledge, or attitudes that result in improved on-the-job performance. Experiential training is a term used to describe learning environments that capitalize on the natural processes that adults use when they learn from experience. Kolb (1984) conceptualized the learning process as a cycle involving four stages: (1) experiencing a situation; (2) reflecting on the experience; (3) deriving insights based on the experience and reflection; and (4) testing those insights in new experiences. Kolb's stages also reflect typical styles of learning - some individuals may have a preference for extended reflection and deriving insights from a single experi-

ence, while others quickly engage in new experiences and spend less time on reflection. Thus, one style or a combination of styles can be favored over other styles by individual learners. According to Kolb (1984), going through each stage of the learning cycle is the optimal process for learning and is characteristic of those who have "learned how to learn."

The guiding principle in experiential learning is that people learn best by doing. The "doing" is achieved in experiential training through the use of a variety of techniques and exercises that require the active participation of group members (such as role playing, group feedback, sharing of emotional experiences). Experiential learning objectives may include changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors. One type of experiential training includes methods and techniques designed to elicit significant emotional experiences among participants in order to increase their self-awareness and thereby change their behavior. Self-awareness is used here to describe a person's understanding of his or her feelings and beliefs that effect his or her behavior. Self-awareness also includes an understanding of the impact of one's behavior on others. Reichard et al. (1992) state that "This ongoing process of self-inquiry enables the individual, group, and organization to continually adapt to changing conditions and forces analysis of the suitability of present behavior" (p. 11).

Miles (1981) suggests that emotional issues are at the heart of the training process because training always involves individual change. To the extent that feedback on behavior is provided by the trainer and group members, the individual's self-image may be challenged, with all the attendant feelings of tension, stress, and threat. As important as emotions are in the training that Miles describes, they are not the focal method for achieving change. Rather, emotions are simply another (albeit inevitable) source of data to consider in the learning process. Sorohan (1993) also points out that emotional risks are involved in acquiring the skills of "learning how to learn," such as unlearning past practices, acknowledging unspoken assumptions, and changing or giving up deeply held beliefs. However, these are the skills that are necessary in achieving the greatest individual growth.

In contrast to Miles' (1981) view of emotional issues in training, other types of training place a high value and emphasis on eliciting and identifying feelings that influence behavior. Sensitivity training, T-groups, and encounter groups represent three of the more common types of training. All three assert that significant emotional events experienced within training serve as the catalyst for changes in self-awareness which, in turn, leads to changes in behavior. Reichard et al. (1992) categorize each of these types of training under the broad term "laboratory education." They describe laboratory education as a "combination of experiential and affective learning in programs to increase self-awareness, improve interpersonal competence, encourage risk taking, build more cohesive groups or work teams, raise self esteem, and study group and organizational dynamics" (p. 2). The term *laboratory education* will be used throughout this review to represent sensitivity training, T-groups, and encounter groups, except where reference materials specify a particular type of laboratory education.

Social interactions form the basis for individual change and changes in interpersonal relationships in laboratory education. Bennis (1970) states "The degree to which participants can communicate their feelings and in turn evoke valid feelings from other members is regarded as an important criterion of group growth" (p. 21). Thus, participants are encouraged to shed their tendency to intellectualize experiences within the group and to honestly and openly communicate how they feel about the interactions taking place with each other. Group member feedback is thought to contribute to participants' understanding of the effects of their behavior on other group members, and thus increase participant self-awareness (Argyris, 1968). Goliembewski and Blumberg (1970) point out that the prime goal of T-groups is not individual behavioral change - "Rather, the goal is to provide feedback and support for testing whether change will help the individual get more of what he wants in interpersonal and intergroup relations" (p. 7).

Although experts in training tend to see emotional reactions as almost inevitable in the experiential learning process, they vary as to its emphasis and use to produce individual learning. Laboratory education

reflects the type of experiential training that emphasizes emotional content as the primary source of learning. The goals and methods of laboratory education, as opposed to other training methods, appear to be most similar to those used in diversity awareness training. The concerns raised about diversity awareness training - the potential for backlash and psychological risk - point to a need to compare the effectiveness of its training methods with the potential risks it entails. In the next section, available research on the use of laboratory education in changing behavior is reviewed to assess its potential effectiveness as applied to diversity awareness training.

### **The Influence of Emotional Experiences in Behavior Change**

Given that laboratory education does not identify behavior change as an explicit goal of the training, it was difficult to find research studies of laboratory education that included behavior change as a measure of training effectiveness. In addition, no training evaluation studies could be found that directly compared different experiential learning techniques in meeting the same learning objectives. Available research studies were reviewed to determine what conclusions, if any, could be made regarding the effectiveness of laboratory education training techniques.

Seashore (1970), concluded that laboratory education was effective in changing managers' behavior, but cited no studies in support of his claim. In fact, he acknowledged that research on the effectiveness of laboratory education was scarce and, what existed, was typically methodologically flawed. Reviews of studies of supervisor and manager laboratory education outcomes have shown that laboratory education can result in behavioral change (Burke & Day, 1986; Campbell & Dunnette, 1968; Smith, 1975). However, like Seashore (1970), both Campbell and Dunnette (1968) and Smith (1975) point out problems in how the research studies were conducted. Problems such as potential biases in observers' ratings of post-training behavior and lack of adequate comparison groups for assessing behavior change mean that the results of these studies cannot be generalized to other laboratory education groups. Another issue

noted by Campbell and Dunnette (1968) is that the studies did not address how changes in ratings of, for example, "flexibility" and "increased openness" influenced *effectiveness* in job performance. That is, "increased openness" was not specifically linked to performance in areas such as enhancing two-way communication with employees, increasing participative decision-making among employees, or successfully negotiating a labor-management agreement.

Burke and Day (1986) used a sophisticated statistical technique in summarizing the outcomes of research studies on the effectiveness of different managerial training methods in changing behavior. They found that although laboratory education did show overall positive effects across all of the studies they reviewed, the effect was highly variable among individual studies. That is, training outcomes for the laboratory education studies ranged from having no effect to large positive effects. In addition, the authors criticized the methods used to measure behavior change, suggesting that observers used to provide post-training ratings could be biased. Burke and Day (1986) suggested that other aspects of the training, such as trainer experience, might account for the different outcomes across studies.

Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) also demonstrated the variable outcomes of laboratory education in their investigation of 18 different encounter groups representing ten ideological schools (for example, Gestalt, psychodrama, and transactional analytic groups). Encounter group members showed more psychological change, both positive and negative, than did individuals who had not participated in a group experience. However, two-thirds of the participants were unaffected by the training, dropped out of training, experienced negative change, or underwent significant psychological distress. Like Burke and Day (1986), Lieberman et al. noted the trainer's influence on training outcomes.

Although no studies were found that directly compared laboratory education techniques with other training techniques in achieving the same learning and performance objectives, the review by Burke and Day (1986) provided some indication of the effectiveness of laboratory education relative to other training techniques. They found that the outcomes of research

studies of the behavioral modeling training method (observing behavior demonstrated by a model, attaching key learning points, and practicing the behavior) were positive and consistent. In comparison, the outcomes of studies of laboratory education results were somewhat unpredictable. Thus, there appear to be methods that are more effective at changing behavior than those used within a laboratory education approach.

**Summary.** Research on the effectiveness of laboratory education provides some evidence that changes in behavior can result from training that uses emotional experiences within groups, but the changes can be positive or negative and may affect only a fraction of trainees. There is no conclusive research evidence that emotion-based experiential training is more or less effective in changing behavior than other training methods. However, two research reviews indicate that laboratory education results may be relatively less consistent compared to the results of other training methods.

Emotional reactions in experiential training do not need to be prevented or avoided. In fact, avoiding emotional reactions is considered by some trainers to be an impossibility, since it is a natural by-product of an effective learning process. This situation is different from laboratory education aimed at creating emotionally charged environments to serve as the substance of the individual growth process and where the process may receive little guidance or assistance from the group leader. Research on laboratory education has not clearly demonstrated consistent benefits for all trainees. In fact, Lieberman et al. (1973) found that some individuals experienced negative outcomes from laboratory education. Thus, until evidence is accumulated to the contrary, laboratory education is not an efficient model for achieving behavioral change for all trainees.

### **The Role of Attitudes in Changing Behavior**

The laboratory education approach just described focuses on increasing self-awareness (understanding oneself and the impact one's behavior on others) to create behavior change. Another approach to behavior change is to concentrate on changing attitudes about actions or objects related to the target behavior.

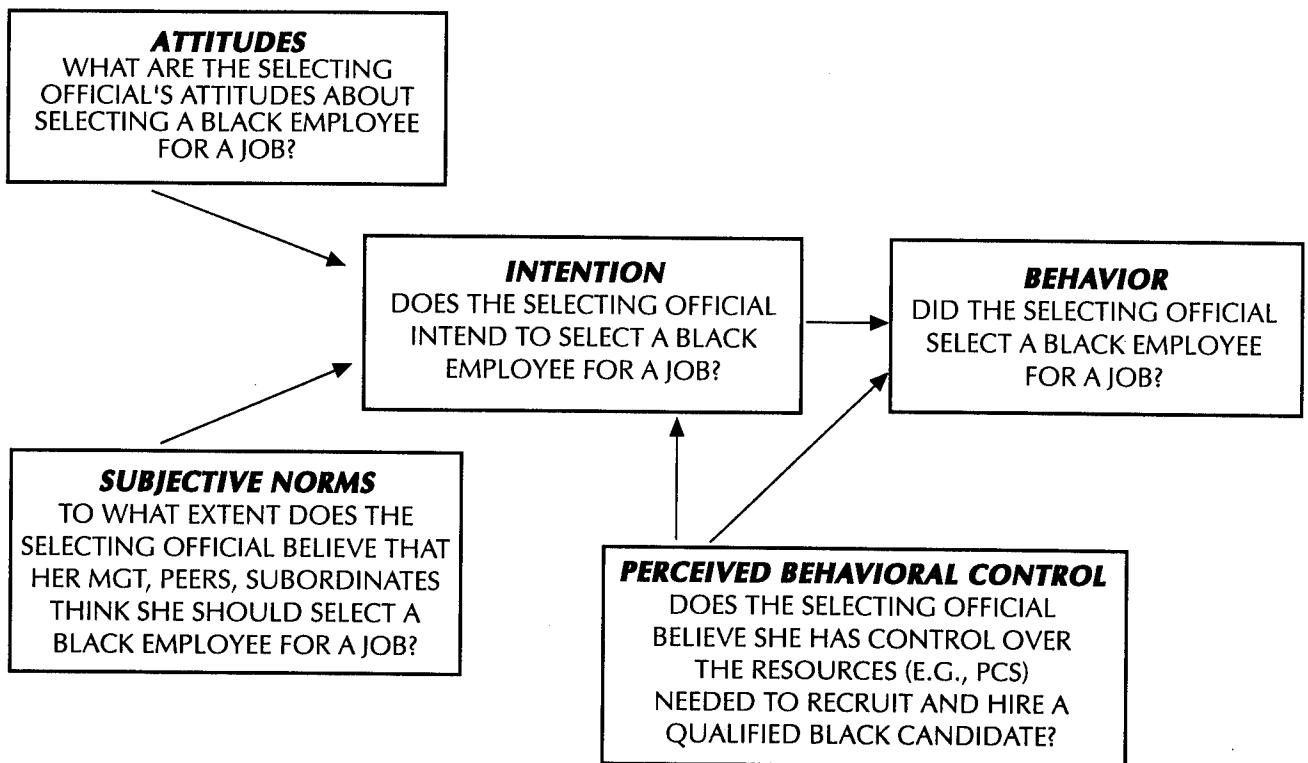
Many factors influence the attitude-behavior relationship. Although training may be used to successfully alter attitudes, the individual and situational factors that operate in the work environment make it unlikely that any training intervention targeted solely at shaping participants' attitudes will produce the desired change in on-the-job behavior. Rather, training and other interventions must be directed toward affecting a number of individual and situational factors simultaneously to ensure behavior change.

A long history of research on attitudes and behavior suggests that there are multiple factors influencing the attitude-behavior relationship. Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, an elaboration of an earlier model proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), provides an example of how attitudes and other factors influence behavior. The theory of planned behavior posits that the best predictor of behavior is the intention to engage in the behavior. Intentions are a function of attitudes toward the behavior and beliefs about the extent to which others think the behavior should be enacted (subjective norms). An additional factor in the model is whether the behavior is believed to be

under behavioral control, i.e., the individual has the opportunity and resources to perform the behavior. According to Ajzen, accurate prediction of behavior requires that the measurement of attitudes and behavior be at the same level of specificity. As an illustration of Ajzen's theory, the optimal measurement model for predicting whether or not a black candidate will be selected for a job would specifically assess an individual's (1) attitudes about hiring a black candidate, (2) self-perceptions of how others feel about the individual hiring a black candidate, and (3) perceptions of personal control over the hiring of a black candidate. A graphic illustration of the model is shown in Figure 1.

As demonstrated in the model, attitudes are just a part of the equation for predicting whether a certain behavior will occur. Targeting training on attitude change as the only intervention for changing on-the-job behavior is not likely to be successful. Rather, concurrent interventions aimed at changing perceived behavioral control, intentions, and subjective norms are needed to maximize the likelihood of behavior change. Using the example above, organizational policies may

Figure 1. Model Illustrating Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior



need to be changed to delegate control of permanent-change-of-station (PCS) funds (perceived behavioral control). Where change in more general attitudes is sought, such as diversity-related attitudes, training might also involve performance contracts for on-the-job behavior (intentions). Follow-up meetings of trainees could be a source of social support for trainees to try new behaviors (subjective norms).

Ajzen's model also requires that the detail or specificity at which attitudes and behavior are measured must be at the same level. For example, according to Ajzen's model, a specific measure of attitudes about hiring black employees would do a better job of predicting an individual's hiring of black employees than would a general attitude on race relations. The general attitude measure, on the other hand, would more accurately predict a *composite* of behaviors (such as support for special emphasis groups, participation in cultural awareness activities, and contributing to the United Negro College Fund) than would a specific attitude about hiring black employees. Research findings support the importance of correspondence in the level of measurement of attitudes and behaviors for accurate prediction (see, for example, Bagozzi, 1981 and Sjoberg, 1982). It follows that interventions must consider the general-specific linkage between attitudes and behaviors in determining which attitudes should be addressed in training to impact one or multiple behaviors.

Another perspective on the attitude-behavior relationship argues that Ajzen's model is incomplete and excludes individual and situational factors that also influence the attitude-behavior relationship (Abelson, 1982). In the example used to illustrate Ajzen's model (1991), a mediational perspective would include situational factors, such as the organization's level of enforcement for achieving Affirmative Action goals and rewards and recognition for increasing diversity in the organization, as components in the attitude-behavior relationship. In addition, such individual characteristics as the selecting official's previous experience with black persons and knowledge of recruitment techniques would be considered important to describing and predicting the attitude-behavior relationship. Interventions following the mediational perspective, in addition to the training and other

interventions suggested previously, might include changing organizational personnel policies to increase options for attracting and hiring employees (situational factors). Other possibilities include making better use of reward and recognition systems to reinforce the desirability of reaching Affirmative Action goals (situational factors) and increasing the individual's knowledge of recruitment techniques (individual factors).

Still other research in the attitude-behavior domain has focused on changing behavior to influence changes in attitudes (for a review, see Tesser & Shaffer, 1990). This line of research has demonstrated that individuals who engage in behavior that is counter to their initial attitudes will, under certain conditions, modify their attitudes to be consistent with their behavior. In addition, social support for the behavior from peers seems to enhance attitudinal change. Designing an intervention that is consistent with these research findings for the example in Figure 1 might involve first developing agency policies that influence the occurrence of desired behavior (e.g., hiring to meet Affirmative Action principles). Once the behavior is exhibited, a change in attitudes should follow.

**Summary.** Attitudes are one of many influences of behavior change. Research has shown that a change in attitude does not guarantee a change in behavior and, in fact, changes in behavior can precede changes in attitudes. Thus, reliance on training solely directed at attitude change will not effectively achieve changes in behavior. Training should include the development of skills and knowledge related to the desired behavior, as well as attitude change. In addition, multiple interventions aimed at supporting new skills, knowledge, and attitudes on the job are needed to produce and maintain behavior change.

### **Options or Gradations of Experiential Training to Ensure Effectiveness**

Optimizing the impact of experiential training requires careful consideration of a number of factors in the planning and actual conduct of the training course. Research on the different factors that might influence training outcomes is scarce so that clear empirical support for decisions regarding, for example, length of training sessions is lacking. Nonetheless, the

training literature discusses a variety of experiential factors to be considered in developing effective training and provides some guidelines for decision-making. This section reviews those factors thought to influence training outcomes and provides research results where available for four broad areas: (1) the conduct of training, (2) trainer characteristics, (3) trainee characteristics, and (4) the transfer of training back to the job.

### **Conduct of Training**

**Selection of Methods.** The utility of any particular training method is defined within the context of the purpose of the training. Activities such as observation, practice, and feedback are considered vehicles for experiential learning, whether they take place in managerial or technical training courses. However, as Miles (1981) stresses, the *function* of training should determine the *form* that training will take. For example, activities that require the appropriate use of knowledge and procedures (e.g., trouble shooting exercises) could be used to improve participants' problem-solving strategies. When the goal is to improve specific behaviors, training environments can be set up to allow individuals to respond to hypothetical situations. The situation might involve responding to peers and subordinates, as in the case of role-play situations, or reacting to an aircraft trying to maneuver around a storm system, as programmed into the Dynamic Simulation used in air traffic field training. Attitude and value change might be approached by establishing discussion groups to meet over longer periods of time. As demonstrated in these examples, Kolb's (1984) model of learning through experience (have an experience, reflect on the experience, develop insights, and test the insights) can be applied to any training situation.

**Differences in Experiential Learning Environments.** For many, experiential learning tends to bring to mind an emotionally charged situation where individual disclosure is the key. In fact, that description reflects only one of the many learning situations that

fall under experiential learning. Walter and Marks (1981) described differences in experiential learning environments along four different dimensions:

- **focus**, on either content, attitudes and emotions of the trainees, interactions among trainees, or a combination of the three;
- **intensity**, or the extent of the coverage of a particular topic;
- **mode of interaction**, referring to the level of interaction between trainees and between the leader and trainees;
- **orientation**, made up of place (the training setting and outside the training setting), time (past, present, and future), and theoretical position of the trainer (his/her model of human functioning).

Combinations of these dimensions reflect the various objectives of different training groups. Reichard et al. (1992) discuss training objectives in terms of the emphasis training groups place on learning (e.g., new information, facts, behavior) or psychological change (e.g., coping ability, self-esteem). Following Walter and Marks (1981) and Reichard et al. (1982), Table 1 provides a simplified depiction of the differences in learning environments for achieving psychological and behavioral change.

The learning environment sets the context for how particular exercises will be used. For example, to create behavioral change, role-play could be used to give trainees opportunities to develop and practice new skills that are directly applicable to the job. In an environment where psychological change is the goal, role-play might be used as a means for eliciting from trainees emotional responses that serve as the basis for learning and understanding oneself.

Keeping trainees on the appropriate level of learning and psychological change is the job of the trainer. Managing emotional intensity experienced between and within individuals is particularly important, since as emotional intensity is allowed to increase, the learning environment of the training may shift to that

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE	BEHAVIORAL CHANGE
<b>FOCUS</b>	
Attitudes and emotions of trainees, interactions among trainees	Content (e.g., interpersonal skills)
<b>INTENSITY</b>	
Extensive, comprehensive examination of self and interactions with others	Extensive, comprehensive coverage of relevant principles and facts; modeling of behavior
<b>MODE OF INTERACTION</b>	
Primarily interactions are among trainees	Balance of interactions among trainees and trainees with group leader
<b>ORIENTATION</b>	
"Here and now" (respond to interactions among trainees in the training setting)	"There and then" (learning new skills to be used back on the job)

Table 1. Differences between Experiential Learning Environments

which is more characteristic of laboratory education. Without assurance that trainees possess the requisite desire and skills to engage in that type of learning environment, some trainees may experience negative psychological outcomes from participation.

**Length and Frequency of Training Sessions.** The length and frequency of training are important variables to consider in developing training. Walter and Marks (1981) stated that one-hour sessions are typically insufficient for experiential methods because of the time involved in introducing the activity, debriefing, and summary phases, as well as the time it takes to do the activity itself. They suggest that three hours is generally adequate for a single exercise. The scheduling of sessions is another consideration in the training development process. Marathon sessions, shorter sessions scheduled over a period of months, and week-long sessions are variations in scheduling that are thought to impact the change process by affecting group involvement and the opportunity for reflection and integration.

No research was found that empirically determined optimal scheduling for specific training methods and desired outcomes, although Smith (1975) found some suggestive differences between several studies, indicating that total training time and scheduling might influence results. Smith (1975) compared the reported positive outcomes of training courses that varied in duration and found that rates of success were not different for courses lasting 20-25 hours, 26-35 hours, or 36 or more hours. Marathon courses (i.e., courses scheduled for consecutive hours on consecutive days) had a greater rate of success than did classes scheduled over a period of time (e.g., once a week for an hour). At this point, it appears that trainers in both the private and public sector rely on their experience and expertise, as well as practical constraints, rather than empirical data to determine the length and scheduling of training.

Just as the use of particular methods will influence decisions about the length and frequency of training sessions, practical considerations (e.g., cost, availability

of training sites, and availability of trainees) will constrain the training methods that are used. Training design must balance these influences to come up with workable and effective training.

**Debriefing/Process Analysis.** Debriefing and process analysis are somewhat different, but related aspects of the training session. Although Walter and Marks (1981) simply describe debriefing as “a discussion of the completed activity,” it is critical in providing “detail, order, and meaning to the participants’ experiences” (p. 166). Objective feedback, self-disclosure and listening, and reactions to the feedback and disclosure are parts of the reflection and integration phases of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle described earlier in this paper. Although too much time spent in debriefing can be detrimental to the training process by reducing involvement and confusing the group, the tendency is to err in allowing insufficient time for this process. Walter and Marks (1981) suggest that when in doubt, add more time to this phase of training.

Whereas debriefing focuses on the learning activity itself, process analysis refers to taking time to assess and reflect on the group process as trainees participate in learning exercises (Miles, 1981). In process analysis, trainees take time out to discuss what is happening among group members as they proceed through an activity. Interpersonal, personal, and procedural issues may be discussed to understand the group process. Miles (1981) argues that understanding how the group works is seen as grist for more learning and an important component of the overall learning process.

**Summary.** The research literature has not clearly identified specific types of training methods and activities, experiential learning environments, training schedules, or debriefing times as more or less effective in achieving particular outcomes. However, the training literature does suggest several guidelines for planning and conducting training. First, select training methods that match the goals of training. For example, if trainees are expected to exhibit new skills back on the job, they should have an opportunity to practice those new skills during training. Second, the environment of the training should be consistent with the goals or objectives of training. That is, if behavior change is the goal, training methods and the learning

environment should conform to the goal. If psychological change is the training goal, certain conditions should be met to minimize potential risk and optimize training effects. These conditions will be discussed throughout the remainder of this review. Third, to the degree possible, let the training objectives drive the scheduling of training. If practical constraints get in the way, develop innovative ways of separating the training into components. For example, trainees could complete a computer-based instruction course to obtain the knowledge portion of a training course prior to offsite training for skills practice. Finally, make sure that sufficient time is spent in debriefing and process analysis to reinforce learning, tie the learning to on-the-job behavior, and increase participant understanding of group process.

### **Trainer Characteristics**

**Trainer Behavior.** Reviews of training effectiveness by Campbell and Dunnette (1968) and Burke and Day (1986) have underscored the need for additional research to assess trainer influences in training outcomes. Characteristics such as the level of trainer experience and the trainer’s role, especially in sensitivity training, have been identified as important variables for future research. Unfortunately, few appear to have answered the call for further investigation of trainer characteristics. Only one study could be found that evaluated the influence of trainer characteristics on training outcomes.

In a study of 18 different laboratory education groups conducted by Lieberman et al. (1973), some groups demonstrated more positive trainee outcomes than did other groups. The authors attributed the relative success of these groups not to the school of thought to which the trainer ascribed (e.g., Gestalt), but to the trainer’s behavior in leading the group. Trainers in the successful groups, in comparison to those of less successful groups, were observed to demonstrate (1) greater caring (e.g., support, praise, acceptance) and meaning attribution (e.g., translating feelings and experiences into ideas), (2) balanced emotional stimulation (i.e., appropriate levels of challenge and confrontation), and (3) appropriate exercise of executive functions (e.g., setting limits and norms).

Other authors have discussed ethical issues for trainers (Miles, 1981; Reichard et al., 1992; Walter & Marks, 1981) and the trainer's roles (e.g., support, interpretation, education; Miles, 1981). The degree to which trainers are able to effectively perform these different roles and the influence of these roles on training outcomes has not been empirically examined. This is not to say that trainer capabilities are unimportant influences of the training process. Rather, it points to the critical need for improved measurement of trainer performance and investigations of its impact on training outcomes.

**Trainer Credibility and Other Characteristics.** A series of experiments on attitude change conducted in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated that the credibility of the communicator affects the likelihood and the degree of attitude or opinion change (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGuire, 1964; Kelman, 1958; Bochner & Insko, 1965). Stelnicki and Silber (1991) described a number of principles for teaching attitudinal objectives, including characteristics of the trainer. They noted the need for taking steps to enhance the trainer's (1) credibility (e.g., expert on the subject matter), (2) attractiveness (e.g., portray the trainer as having similar attitudes as the audience), (3) power (e.g., high social status, in control of rewards), and (4) speech style (e.g., use of visual images) to enhance the influence of the trainer in changing attitudes.

**Summary.** Although there is little research on the relationship between trainer characteristics and training outcomes, there is general agreement that trainer skills and experience are potentially important contributors to the effectiveness of experiential training. In the case of training used to produce attitude change, other characteristics of the trainer (e.g., credibility) are important in influencing training outcomes. Given the potential impact of trainer characteristics on the success of training, standards for trainer performance and methods for its assessment are needed as part of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training.

### **Trainee Characteristics**

**Learning Styles.** Regardless of the type of experiential training that is provided, not everyone will learn the same things from the same training experiences,

nor will everyone learn equally effectively from the experience. This is due, in part, to the different learning styles that adults have developed over time. A learning style refers to the characteristic way in which an individual perceives and processes information about him/herself and the environment. Learning styles can influence approaches to learning tasks (e.g., broadly understanding the whole task versus step-by-step detail), and attention to certain features of the learning task (e.g., political aspects of the decision-making process versus potential impacts of the decision). In addition to differences in attending and processing information, individuals may vary in the degree to which they openly share what they think they have learned (Lawrence, 1982). Whereas some individuals may quietly reflect on a training activity and keep their thoughts and feelings private, others may be more action-oriented and prefer greater amounts of discussion and feedback on the training activity.

Several authors have suggested that paying attention to different learning styles is important in developing effective training (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1979; Mezoff, 1982; Sims, 1993). They propose that greater success in training could be achieved by matching the cognitive styles of trainees with instructional strategies. There is some research evidence that students whose learning styles match the instructional style of the teacher demonstrate better performance outcomes at the end of a college course (Carlson, 1991; Cooper & Miller, 1991) and in a laboratory setting (Pask & Scott, 1972; Pask, 1976) than those students whose learning styles are mismatched with the teacher's instructional style.

Others are less optimistic about the gains to be had by matching learning and instructional styles. Cronbach and Snow (1977), at the time of their review, found the effects of matching learning and instruction styles to be inconsistent and difficult to replicate. Still, the authors remain optimistic about the potential for maximizing training effectiveness through attention to individual differences.

Sims (1993) points out that although matching teacher and learner styles may make for more effective training in the short run, there is a need for training programs to also develop participants' capacities for

learning in other, less dominant ways. For example, those whose approach to decision-making is more analytical and logical (“thinking,” according to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) might benefit from exercises that demonstrate how feelings and values might be used in decisions.

Individuals also differ in their ability to handle emotionally-laden material, their level of self-awareness, as well as their readiness and willingness to use information about themselves to change behavior. Although these differences are not “learning styles” as they have been described in this paper, they can affect individual responses to training activities and goals. Goliembewski and Blumberg (1970) noted that T-groups do not seem to be of much worth to “those people whose needs for structure and authority are very high and rigid” (p.13). Those who lack self-awareness and/or desire to change or learn are less likely to positively respond to emotionally-based methods such as those typically used in laboratory education (Argyris, 1968; Yalom, 1985).

**Group Composition and Size.** Personality, ability level, background (including previous experience with the training methods), age, and sex are but a few of the characteristics trainees bring with them to training that may affect the functioning of groups and thus, the training experience (Levine & Moreland, 1990; Walter & Marks, 1981). In addition, the *combination* of these characteristics among trainees may indirectly affect the overall outcomes of training by its influence on the learning process and the dynamics of the group. Finally, trainee characteristics may affect the choice of training methods themselves, if the characteristics of the group are known beforehand (Reichard et al., 1992).

Walter and Marks (1981) described potential training concerns associated with these different characteristics. A mixture of high and low ability students will affect the pace of certain exercises and the degree to which self-directed activities can be used. Argyris (1968) points out that participants in laboratory education need a minimal level of self-awareness and self-acceptance to be able to listen to others and discuss, with minimal distortion, their interpersonal impact in a given situation. The degree to which training participants vary in their levels of self-awareness and

self-acceptance will affect the ability of the trainees to deliver and receive feedback. The learning atmosphere can also be affected by the balance of demographic groups in the training. For example, a predominantly male group will tend to exhibit competitiveness among members, whereas females tend toward more cooperative interactions. “Token” types of group members (e.g., an older person, a person of a different race) can feel alienated and isolated from the rest of the group.

The size of the group impacts group dynamics and thus, the process of training. Certain experiential techniques appear to work best for particular group sizes. Ideally, the identification of training goals and selected methods for addressing those goals will drive the determination of group size. Walter and Marks (1981) provide some guidelines for the group size appropriate for particular training exercises and techniques:

- **Nongroup (2-4):** Best for supportive activities such as feedback, sharing, process observation. Too small to generate the group dynamics needed for some simulations.
- **Small group (5-15):** Appropriate size for most experiential training methods. There are some restrictions for simulations.
- **Large group (15-50):** Appropriate for simulations, exercises, lecture, readings, and writing. Toward the extreme end of this group size, numbers of participants can limit leader-participant interactions and the degree to which personal issues can be examined. In addition, a larger group would need to be divided into smaller groups for experiential activities.
- **Very large group (50+):** Restricted primarily to presentations, readings, writing, and lecture. Too large for most experiential activities; some difficulty in breaking down into smaller groups for experiential exercises.

**Trainee Attitudes and Motivation.** Noe (1986) proposed a model of the effects of trainee attitudes and attributes on training outcomes. Factors such as beliefs about the relationship between individual effort and performance, reactions to skill assessment feedback, and attitudes about the job and career are

hypothesized to affect motivation to learn, which is described as “a specific desire of the trainee to learn the content of the training program” (p. 743). Motivation to learn is hypothesized to affect learning which, in turn, influences behavior change. High motivation to learn is thought to be reflected in individuals who:

- (1) believe that the assessment of their strengths and weaknesses used as criteria for the assignment of training is accurate,
- (2) believe that the content of the training program can be mastered with reasonable effort,
- (3) are engaged in self-development activities that further their career plans and identify with their job, and
- (4) perceive interpersonal support from peers and supervisors and the existence of other resources necessary to do the job.

Little research has been conducted to examine the actual impact of these factors on training. However, a study by Noe and Schmidt (1986) examined the effects of trainee attitudes on the outcomes of training. They found that the participants’ level of involvement in their jobs and careers was an important precursor to learning during training and behavior change back on the job.

**Choice and Voluntary Participation.** Being offered a choice and receiving the desired choice in training content also enhances motivation to learn. A study by Baldwin, Magjuka, and Loher (1991) found that those persons who received their chosen training scored significantly higher on a pre-training measure of motivation to learn than did those who were given no choice on the training received. Although these two groups did not differ on the post-training measure of learning, those who were offered a choice in training and subsequently did not receive their choice, scored significantly lower on the measure of learning.

Similarly, greater attitude change has been found among those who perceived greater freedom of choice to participate (Brock, 1962; Brehm & Cohen, 1959; Davis & Jones, 1960; Jones & Brehm, 1967). Conversely, when individuals perceive being coerced into a situation designed to affect attitude change, they tend to react by holding their original attitude more

strongly than before. Miles (1981) also argues that people “should not be ordered, or even gently coerced” to attend training, nor to participate in specific exercises within training. Reichard et al. (1992) and Walter and Marks (1981) point out that experiential training should be voluntary, since the effectiveness of the training hinges on the involvement of the trainee. If training is nonvoluntary, the concerns of trainees should be processed up front in the training course (Nancy Post, personal communication, July 9, 1993).

**Summary.** Research outcomes clearly illustrate that individual differences associated with learning styles, personality, demographic characteristics, and background experience can influence training effectiveness. Learning styles were found to play a role in individual responsiveness to training activities and learning outcomes. The cost associated with identifying and matching learning and instructional styles, as well as the possibility that employees will perceive the assessment of individual learning styles as intrusive, makes this a less viable use of learning styles to enhance training. However, training should enable individuals to apply their different approaches to learning the objectives to the extent possible and encourage the development of new learning approaches.

Heterogeneous training groups offer both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, members of heterogeneous groups may benefit from the different perspectives and dynamics created by including demographic diversity among trainees. On the other hand, the differences may affect the level of learning because more time is required for group process issues. Trainers need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages, as well as consider the learning objectives that would be affected by having homogeneous or heterogeneous groups. If heterogeneous training groups are used the trainer should be aware of the potential difficulties that might arise from a heterogeneous training group and be prepared to manage the unique issues in the course.

Although there was little research information on trainee attitudes and motivation, it appears to be a fruitful approach in determining who might benefit the most from training and development programs. Reduced funding for these types of programs, in-

creased competition for training and development slots, and the need to obtain the greatest investment on training point to the importance of selecting the individual who will optimize his or her training experience. Measures of, for example, self-development and career planning activity, might serve as useful screening tools for identifying such individuals.

Finally, voluntary participation is recommended for experiential training, especially where attitude change or psychological change is the training goal. Where agency policy requires training, as in diversity awareness training for supervisors and managers, time for addressing participant concerns about the training requirement should be incorporated into the training.

### **Transfer of Training to the Workplace**

Wexley and Latham (1981) define positive transfer of training as the extent to which trainees use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in training back on the job. Thus, maximizing training transfer leads to a greater return on the financial investment in training. To do this, the transfer process needs to be managed as a partnership between trainers, managers, and students. To manage transfer effectively, there are a variety of practices that each person can do before, during, and after training (Beaudin, 1987).

**Transfer Activities Before Training.** One way of increasing transfer is to initiate pretraining exploration of the training content, e.g., through pretraining reading assignments, data gathering, or case study analysis (Beaudin, 1987; Garavaglia, 1993). Supervisors can play a major role in positive transfer by demonstrating support for the training. Ways in which supervisors might show support include being knowledgeable of the training content and making training a priority, even when workload is heavy (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Supervisors can lay the groundwork for transfer by discussing expectations for and benefits of the training, and setting goals with the trainee for improving skills before the training occurs (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986).

**Transfer Activities During Training.** Miles (1981) presented a number of activities to be used during training to help trainees *bridge* from the training to the job. The activities are used to help trainees see the relationship between what they learned in training

and its application on the job, put strong reactions to the training in perspective, and consolidate what they have learned. Suggested activities include “planning what to say about the program to others on the job; evaluating the training program for its relevance to job problems; making “contracts” about one’s future behavior with members of one’s work team; planning specific innovations, projects, or new styles of behaving at work; and practicing difficult and needed skills” (p. 105).

Wexley and Baldwin (1986) also identified several ways in which transfer can be enhanced during training: (1) ensure that tasks in the training environment are identical to those on the job, (2) teach the principles and theories that underlie the content of the training, (3) have trainees continue to practice skills, even after they have been mastered, and (4) provide variability in examples used to demonstrate a knowledge or skill and the situations in which trainees practice the skills. The latter method is particularly important in increasing a trainee’s understanding of how the training applies to new situations and his/her ability to generalize the skills to new situations.

Noe (1986) suggested that *motivation to transfer*, the trainee’s desire to apply knowledge and skills learned in training to the work setting, provides the link between learning and behavior change. Relatedly, Garavaglia (1993) stated that one of the most likely reasons for the failure of training to transfer to the workplace is that trainees feel the training is irrelevant. Assessing a trainee’s motivation to transfer would include measurement of the trainee’s confidence in using the new skills or knowledge and the perceived applicability of the skills or knowledge to the job. Collecting these assessments following a prototype course or a formalized course would provide an indication of the effectiveness of the course, as well as the likelihood that learning will transfer to the job.

**Transfer Activities After Training.** What happens on the job following training is also critical to reinforcing learning and ensuring that skills are maintained. Wexley and Baldwin (1986) believe that traditional approaches to enhancing transfer during training are insufficient for achieving substantial levels of transfer. They, and Garavaglia (1993),

<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
Additional self-training, including self-monitoring of the use of new skills or knowledge and activities related to the training to be completed on the job	Readings, weekly checklist, self-ratings on skills and knowledge, shadowing assignment
Job aids	Sexual harassment desk guide for supervisors
Post-training assignments that are relevant to the training content and provide opportunities to practice new skills	Quality action team member, Combined Federal Campaign chair
Changing job standards to reflect skills and knowledge learned in training	EEO/AA critical job element included in performance standards
Participative goal setting	Development plan negotiated with supervisor
Relapse prevention (identifying situations that might undermine new learning and developing coping responses for those situations)	Sessions following sexual harassment training to discuss and practice assertive responses to inappropriate workplace behavior

Table 2. Post-Training Transfer Strategies and Workplace Examples

suggested a variety of post-training strategies for enhancing transfer. Several of the strategies and examples of their possible use are presented in Table 2.

Post-training transfer activities have tended to receive conceptual examination, rather than empirical investigation. Where research results exist, though, they have generally been positive. For example, Wexley and Baldwin (1986) compared those who participated in one of three post-training transfer conditions - relapse prevention, assigned goal-setting, and participative goal-setting - with a group who did not participate in post-training. Participants in the goal-setting groups demonstrated greater transfer of training than did those who received no post-training sessions.

Achieving transfer after training is described by Goldstein (1990) as building an *organizational climate for the transfer of training*. The transfer climate is made up of *situational cues* (encouragement to try out what was learned) and *consequences* (rewards for trying out what was learned). These situational cues and

consequences are primarily controlled by the trainee's management and organizational policies and procedures. One example of a situational cue is a manager asking a subordinate supervisor to share his/her training experience and learning with coworkers on the job. A consequence for a manager using his/her training on the job would be preferential consideration for a new assignment. In a study reported by Goldstein, it was found that when situational cues and consequences were present, greater transfer behavior occurred independent of the level of learning achieved from training. Goldstein's findings suggest that active organizational and management support is critical to ensure new skills are actually applied back on the job.

**Summary.** The literature on transfer of training suggests that experiential training is more likely to be effective in changing behavior when (1) support for training is demonstrated in the workplace, (2) the application of new knowledge and skills to the job is integrated into the training itself, (3) specific strate-

gies are used following training to reinforce and maintain new skills and knowledge, and (4) the work environment provides opportunities and rewards for practicing and mastering the new skills.

### **Findings of Experiential Learning Applied to Diversity Awareness Training**

Like other types of training courses, diversity awareness training can incorporate aspects of experiential learning and associated training methods. As noted in the introduction of this report, diversity training that focuses on gender and racial differences, stereotypes, and inequalities can produce adverse effects for participants if not handled appropriately. This section incorporates the concerns of diversity awareness training participants identified in an evaluation report by the author (Myers, 1993) to illustrate issues to be considered in designing and delivering diversity awareness training.

### **Emotional Intensity of Training**

One concern identified in the author's (Myers, 1993) training evaluation report dealt with the potential for negative psychological reactions arising from sharing and listening to employees' emotionally charged experiences with racism and sexism. As shown earlier in this review, the training and laboratory education literature acknowledges that including emotional experiences in training can pose some potential risks to the trainee. Some respondents in the evaluation study felt the discussions too closely mirrored a psychological intervention, while others acknowledged that the experience was emotional but did not feel it was damaging. In fact, the latter group of respondents felt that the emotional experience was responsible for the perceived success of the training in changing attitudes.

The comments of those interviewed about diversity awareness training pointed to two situations from which negative psychological reactions could occur: (1) *listening* to the experiences of racism and sexism of others and (2) *sharing* personal experiences of sexism and racism. Applied to diversity awareness training,

those who listened to experiences and were confronted with information that pointedly questioned their self-concept, beliefs, and values could be affected adversely by the training. Sharing past harassment and racism experiences may also trigger adverse psychological effects for those persons who share their experiences, exacerbating or reinflaming psychological and physiological conditions (Guteck & Koss, 1993). The possible psychological and somatic impacts on victims of sexual harassment have been summarized by Guteck and Koss (1993) and include depression, low-self esteem, headaches, and insomnia. A history of experienced racism can also take its toll on the psychological and physical health of its victims, causing hypertension (Kreiger, 1990) and depression (Spaights & Simpson, 1986).

Robert Hayles, vice president of cultural diversity for Grand Metropolitan Food Sector in Minneapolis, cautioned against implementing training that included techniques and exercises used to uncover and explore one's own and others' prejudices and biases, unless it was voluntary and facilitated by professionals (Gordon, 1992). Walter and Marks (1981) discussed limits on self-disclosure in training as protecting the freedom and privacy of training participants. They suggested that self-disclosure be used sparingly and strictly for the stated purpose, unless otherwise negotiated prior to the beginning of training. Cox (1993) recommended that decisions to include personal experiences, rather than simply using indirect methods (such as videotapes, readings) be based on the following: "(1) the time available for the training (don't plan on emotion and personal experience if time is short), (2) knowledge of the intended audience (e.g., the likelihood of an explosion if personal testimonies are emphasized), and (3) the skill and experience of the facilitators (e.g., only highly skilled trainers<sup>1</sup> should use a personal confrontation approach)" (pp. 244-245).

Although the inclusion of methods meant to elicit emotional reactions may pose greater risk to participants than other experiential methods, emotional content may still be an important component of

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, Cox (1993) and Hayles (in Gordon, 1992) speak of having "professional" and "highly skilled" trainers, but do not go on to describe the qualifications of such a trainer. The need for establishing standards for trainer selection and performance is discussed in a subsequent section of this report.

attitude change in diversity awareness training. The feelings to be dealt with in training, however, *are those experienced in response to targeted groups of individuals*. Studies of prejudice have found that emotional feelings, such as fear and respect toward outgroups (e.g., homosexuals, minorities), are more highly predictive of attitudes toward the outgroup than are stereotypic beliefs about the outgroup (Esses, Haddock, & Zanna; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, both cited in Olson & Zanna, 1993). The key issue remaining is what type of intervention or training will change emotional feelings toward particular groups of individuals. Contact with members of outgroups is still the most widely recommended technique for changing prejudicial attitudes (Olson & Zanna, 1993) and may also work to change emotional feelings as well. However, for the contact to be effective, the groups must be engaged in a cooperative task and composed of members of equal status (Desforges, Lord, Ramsey, Mason, Van Leeuwen, & others, 1991; Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990).

**Summary.** The probability of negative psychological impact resulting from diversity awareness training is practically impossible to predict without a clear understanding of the objectives, learning environment, and methods used in the training. In addition, individual differences in responding to harassing or discriminatory treatment, as well as reactions to feedback (e.g., “you are a racist”) that is incongruent with self-perceptions, affect whether a trainee will experience adverse effects. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the unknowns in predicting negative outcomes, diversity training in the future should consider using indirect methods for presenting information on the occurrence of sexism and racism or closely follow the guidelines suggested by Cox (1993) for using personal experiences. The results of research on prejudice suggest that including training exercises that involve a cooperative task would be effective in creating positive attitudes about individual differences (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation).

### **Trainer and Facilitator Behavior**

A consistent comment noted in the evaluation dealt with the confrontational style of the trainers and facilitators. Some of the respondents felt that they

personally had been unfairly accused of racism and sexism by the trainers; others had observed the confrontational responses of the trainer and facilitator to training participants. Articles on the potential for backlash in diversity training have pointed out that confrontational styles that include finger-pointing and blame can do significant damage to diversity efforts (Caudron, 1993; Mobley & Payne, 1992). Training could potentially exacerbate situations where, as described by Gates (1993), white males are already feeling blamed for all societal problems and are raising self-protective defenses. Rather than moving forward in the acceptance of one’s personal racism, seen as a critical step toward developing effective interpersonal relationships with those who belong to a different cultural group, individuals may take a step back in the process (Corvin & Wiggins, 1989; Foeman, 1991).

Both too little and too much confrontation can lower positive outcomes from the group training experience (Yalom, 1985). The group with too little confrontation may not be sufficiently challenged to reexamine individual feelings and attitudes that could lead to behavioral change. Too much confrontation can result in pushing trainees beyond their emotional limits, resulting in adverse psychological effects or entrenchment in the attitudes and behavior the training was meant to change. Highly confrontative presentations can cause individuals to take action to protect their self-esteem, for example, by tuning out the message (Pittman & D’Agostino, 1989) or by denying the relevance of the topic or attribute under discussion to themselves (Crocker & Major, 1989). The appropriate use of confrontation requires that it be accompanied by support (Miles, 1981). Similarly, Corvin and Wiggins (1989) stated that, at different stages of the training process, trainees may “benefit more from acceptance and encouragement than from intense confrontation.”

These research findings are reflected in a description of the efforts of Digital Equipment Corporation in instilling a value for differences (Walker & Hanson, 1992). Self-awareness training was initially unsuccessful because managers defended accusations of being racist and sexist by shutting down communication during training. The managers felt their personal character was under attack and that they were being

asked to change their values and beliefs. Subsequent training sessions took the approach that racism and sexism are so much a part of American culture that everyone is responsible for racism and sexism. Once managers understood they were not being labeled as bad people, and realized that they were learning about themselves as well as about others who are different from them, meaningful change started to happen in the training.

Another related concern identified in the evaluation was that the trainers and facilitators were advocating their personal agendas on racism and sexism, rather than contributing to the learning experience. Foeman (1991) acknowledged that trainers do come to training with attitudes about "the place of racial groups in a multiracial society." She suggested that trainers/facilitators may want to share their position with the group, where it can be accepted or rejected. Sharing and discussing the trainer's position is meant to show that there is no single perspective, and that different perspectives are neither right nor wrong.

**Summary.** Trainers and facilitators can do more harm than good if confrontation is not handled appropriately, particularly in diversity awareness training where the topics are sensitive for many trainees. Rather than serving as a catalyst for change, the trainer's behavior can cause further entrenchment in the very attitudes and behavior that are targeted for change. Confrontation is not the only way people take in feedback that is contrary to self-perceptions. Trainers should use multiple methods (e.g., offering alternative explanations, asking the trainee questions, allowing time for reflection) to enhance the trainees' abilities to rethink an opinion, knowledge, or behavior. In addition, the trainer should clearly explain his/her role to trainees (e.g., educator, interpreter, facilitator), as well as his/her position on the issues being discussed in diversity training.

### **Trainer and Facilitator Qualifications**

Another concern given by respondents was the qualifications of the trainers and facilitators, particularly in dealing with the emotional reactions of trainees. Positive outcomes from experiential groups depend heavily on the ability of the leader to manage individual feelings and group dynamics. However, the

training literature more often describes what are good *qualities* (e.g., warmth, genuineness) among effective trainers than what are the necessary *qualifications* (e.g., experience, education). For example, Miles (1981) spends considerable time discussing the trainer's role and what constitutes a good trainer. However, he asserts that graduate education is not required for a person to be a capable trainer, and experience can be an adequate substitute for formal education.

Queries to National Training Laboratories and the American Society for Training and Development revealed that specific standards for education and experience did not exist, partly because the requirements for different types of training will vary (Dr. Allyn Hertzbach and Dr. Holly Schneider, personal communication, October 14, 1993). A variety of factors must be taken into consideration, including education, experience, certificates, and the requirements of the training. Yalom (1985), for example, recommends that group psychotherapists obtain approximately two years of group observation, participation in a group, and supervised postdoctoral experience as a leader. Nancy Post, a faculty member in the Wharton business school and a person who works in executive education, suggests a year-long membership in an experiential group as well as education in managing group dynamics for trainers who use experiential techniques (Nancy Post, personal communication, July 9, 1993).

**Summary.** It is somewhat surprising that, given the consensus on the importance of trainer behavior, more information and research on professional standards is not available. At best, the literature suggests that the qualifications of a trainer used for delivering diversity awareness training will vary according to the objectives of the course. On the other hand, training methods and exercises might be selected to be consistent with what the trainer feels he/she is capable and comfortable in delivering.

### **Minimizing the Risks Associated with Experiential Training**

This section will first briefly identify the risks associated with experiential diversity training. Based on information from the research literature review and the lessons learned from the diversity awareness

training evaluation, safeguards for reducing the possibility of risks will be described in the remainder of the report.

The term risk implies that certain actions have consequences. Some risks can produce positive returns on investment, whereas others can produce no return or can be harmful. The risks to the emotional health of employees who work in harassing or discriminatory environments may outweigh the risks to the emotional health of those who participate in experiential diversity training. As discussed earlier in this paper, the more emotionally intense training experiences are those focusing on personal and interpersonal change. In these training situations, the participant is "expected to become personally and emotionally involved and introspective in regard to themselves and their relationships" (Walter & Marks, 1981, p. 256). Pursuit of emotional intensity can be problematic when the group strays from the original learning objectives and is led by a trainer whose qualifications and experience are insufficient for managing the training process. It is these types of training situations - where adequate leadership as well as control, structure, and purpose of the emotional experience is lacking - that have received criticism (see Odiorne, 1970) and may pose the greatest psychological risk to participants, while failing to produce positive outcomes for the individual or the organization.

Experiential training encompasses a wide variety of techniques, each of which may vary in the risk they pose for participants and their effectiveness in meeting learning and performance objectives. Thus, a critical component of reducing risks or their costs is to design, implement, and evaluate training according to recognized principles of performance technology and training evaluation. Managing the procedural aspects of training, the characteristics of trainees, and the qualifications of trainers are other ways of maximizing training effectiveness while minimizing the risks. These methods are discussed in the remainder of this report.

### **Training Evaluation**

Just as feedback is needed to guide individual performance, organizations require information to determine whether interventions are achieving the desired organizational change. Evaluation is essential

throughout the design and delivery of training to ensure the training is on target in meeting training goals. Evaluation following the training helps to determine whether attitudinal or behavioral change has occurred and how organizational goals have been affected. Collecting trainee reactions is the typical response to training evaluation, while learning and job performance following training are rarely assessed (Sanders, 1989). Training evaluation at the level of learning and job performance is more likely to occur if an organization establishes accountability for evaluation and provides the resources necessary to conduct the evaluation.

**Establish accountability for evaluating diversity awareness training.** Information is needed to determine if training participants are being exposed to risks for which there is no return, or a negative return on investment. The implementation of an evaluation strategy for diversity training would be used to identify the impact of training and the potential risks or costs associated with the training. The training department or training vendor, however, cannot be the sole organization accountable for evaluation. Management must also commit to sharing the accountability for the results of training because some of the organizational factors that influence the transfer of training to the job, such as supervisory support and awards, are not under the control of the training department (Brinkerhoff, 1989). Management must be willing to use these organizational factors to enhance the transfer of training and to reinforce new, on-the-job behavior. With this in mind, measuring the accomplishments of diversity training through the number of training courses delivered is insufficient; accomplishments should reflect the measurable impact of training on learning and job performance.

**Develop resources for evaluating diversity awareness training.** Figure 2, based on Bushnell's (1990) model of training evaluation, illustrates a basic evaluation process for diversity awareness training. Each "E" represents a point at which evaluation should occur. The evaluation questions that should be answered at each point are also listed. The most numerous, and perhaps most critical, evaluation points are during the design and delivery of the training. Carnevale and Schulz (1990) state that "If training is

subject to “continuous improvement” and refinement from front-end problem analysis onward, it has a powerful bias toward success... In fact, use of state-of-the-art instructional design technologies, rather than post-training evaluation, is the best way to assure training’s effectiveness” (p. S-3). Thus, resources for assisting internal trainers in course evaluation, as well as guidelines for assessing training vendor course proposals, are needed.

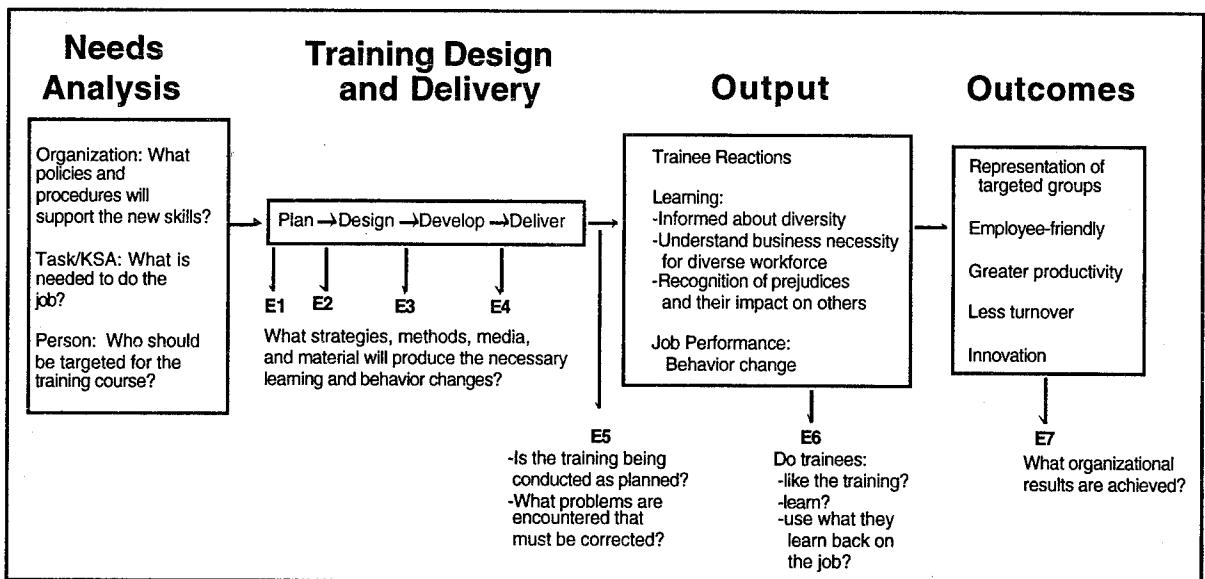
Demands to efficiently use scarce resources to meet business objectives are growing in both the private and public sectors, necessitating that training demonstrate a return on investment. Documentation of training results comes from assessments of learning and job performance, reflected in the “Output” section of the evaluation model. However, trainers typically see job performance-oriented evaluation as involving too much time, money, and expertise (Sanders, 1989). Resources for conducting training evaluation are needed to overcome these possible barriers to its implementation. One possible resource is to develop a consortium of employees to serve as internal

evaluation consultants. Another possibility is to establish an internal clearinghouse of evaluation literature and related diversity awareness training materials. Additional tools for measuring trainee reactions, learning, and job performance should also be developed. Another option is to conduct an evaluation workshop for those responsible for diversity awareness training. The workshop could provide participants with sufficient skills to prepare for an evaluation (e.g., identify important questions to be answered and potential sources of information) and initiate data collection activities.

**Procedural Aspects of Training**

Offer, but don’t require, experiential diversity training that uses laboratory education methods and techniques. Training professionals generally agree that emotional-based experiential training should be voluntary, because the effectiveness of the approach depends upon (1) the involvement of the trainees and (2) the presence of requisite levels of interpersonal skill and self-awareness. In addition, research has

Figure 2. Diversity Awareness Training Evaluation Model



shown that receiving training without a choice and using coercive methods tend to reduce the effectiveness of attitude change efforts.

**Carefully consider whether personal experiences of sexual harassment and racism should be included in the training.** The experiences of sexual harassment and racism can negatively affect the psychological and physical health of its victims. Revisiting those experiences in the training setting has the potential for exacerbating the psychological and physical condition of those who share their experiences, and who may feel pressure to do so. Ensuring individual choice in participation in exercises, where past experiences of work-related sexual harassment and racial discrimination are shared, allows individuals to make decisions about their ability to deal with the issues under discussion. In addition, Cox's (1993) guidelines for using personal experiences to illustrate the occurrence of racism and sexism could be used to decide whether or not indirect methods are more appropriate: (1) is there sufficient time to debrief the experience? (2) is the audience able to handle the experience? and (3) does the trainer have the right skills in sufficient amounts for leading this type of exercise?

**Provide sufficient time for intellectually and emotionally processing each experiential learning exercise during the course and for debriefing the training as a whole.** The time allowed for feedback, discussion, and integration following each exercise and at the end of training is an integral part of the learning and change process (Miles, 1981; Walter & Marks, 1981). Building in adequate time for processing the experiences also allows the trainers or facilitators to more closely monitor the participants' reactions and take appropriate steps to address concerns as they arise.

**Build in processes and activities before, during, and after training that increase the use of the training on the job.** "Bridging" (Miles, 1981) or "positive transfer of training" (Wexley & Latham, 1981) activities involving trainers, trainees, and their supervisors can be used to enhance and maintain changes in job performance. These can include additional sessions following the training, working with supervisors to provide the cues and contingencies to trainees for

demonstrating new skills, or auditing other human resource systems for their consistency in reinforcing changes in job performance.

**Provide training follow-up in the work setting.** The purposes of the follow-up are to (a) discuss strong reactions that might have been elicited during training and, if appropriate, link to changed work behavior, (b) promote organizational and peer support for new behavior, and (c) encourage continuous learning from the training experience. Each of these purposes serves to tie the training to behavior at work. The follow-up itself thus serves as a potent method for refreshing the learned knowledge and skills of trainees and can help to create a climate for positive transfer of training to the job. Trainers or facilitators should be used to lead the follow-up sessions.

### **Characteristics of Trainees**

**Screen participants for experiential diversity training that uses laboratory education methods and techniques.** Reichard et al. (1992) recommend, for experiential training programs *where participation is voluntary*, the use of participant application forms to identify potential factors that may affect responses to training. Training vendors that provide this type of training, for example, National Training Laboratory, often require that the potential trainee submit an application form. Application forms may include questions, such as what the individual wishes to achieve through the training, recency of participation in similar types of experiential training programs, and a measure of general life stress. Based on the applicants' responses, they may be asked to delay participation in the training, or be queried further about their goals for participation to make sure the class is appropriate to their needs and current skills. Some laboratory education vendors ask for information on previous history of group and/or individual psychotherapy and hospitalization because of the possibility that emotional disruption will occur in the training.

**Collect and use information about training participants to enhance training effectiveness.** Demographic data such as the race, sex, age, and educational level of participants, as well as attitudes about the

issue to be addressed in training and motivation to use the training content are examples of information trainers could collect prior to training. Information such as this should be used to identify possible needed modifications to the training curriculum. For example, a heterogeneous training group may need an exercise to address conflict that often arises when a group is composed of dissimilar others. The trainer may also need to adjust activities to deal with differences among trainees in initial attitudes or knowledge about the content of the training (e.g., sexual harassment). Where the training group is made up of individuals from different organizations, post-training transfer strategies may need greater attention (Cooper & Harrison, 1976).

**Prepare participants for training.** The training goals and methods should be clearly articulated up front. Accurate descriptions of training are necessary to eliminate trainee misconceptions, give trainees the opportunity to prepare for the training experience (particularly if they are unaccustomed to experiential learning methods), and to provide the link between the learning objectives and training activities. In this way, there are no “surprises” that may derail trainees who were expecting different training goals and methods. Reichard et al. (1992) state that “By describing the program accurately and requiring the trainers to meet the contract as written, sponsoring organizations can contribute significantly to the prevention of distress” (p. 59). Preparation not only serves to reduce risk, but can contribute to increased effectiveness of the training.

### **Trainer Qualifications**

Although there is some uniformity in the ethical guidelines for instructors, a generally agreed-upon set of professional standards was not found in the literature. Educational, licensing, and other requirements should be commensurate with what is needed to competently use particular training methods and approaches. For example, delivering lectures on a content area does not require the same sort of skills, nor the same level of performance, as does directing role-plays and leading feedback sessions on a skill area. Diversity awareness training would appear to require skills in managing group dynamics, a high level of

personal awareness of racism and sexism, knowledge of rules and regulations governing sexual harassment and other discriminatory behavior, and experience and background in a mental health profession. The problem is identifying educational and other qualifications that indicate whether a trainer possesses these skills and knowledge to the degree needed to deliver training effectively.

A forum consisting of professionals in education and training should be convened to identify the requisite qualifications (e.g., experience, education, and licenses) needed for different types of training. The forum should also identify procedures for (1) periodic assessment of trainer performance and (2) ongoing development of trainer skills.

### **Research Recommendations**

Kraiger, Ford, and Salas (1993) stress the need to evaluate learning outcomes of training from a construct-oriented, theoretical approach. This approach contributes to determining training *effectiveness*, i.e., why the training was successful or unsuccessful in achieving the learning outcomes. The design of training can also profit from theoretical developments in learning and other psychological disciplines by using research results to identify training methods and specific activities most likely to effect the desired learning outcomes and contribute to changes in on-the-job behavior. The framework for diversity training *evaluation* (i.e., whether or not the training achieved the learning and behavior objectives) presented in the previous section and the complex assessment issues associated with evaluation are also important areas for research. The major phases of training development and evaluation identified in that framework serve as the basis for identifying important lines of research for the future.

### **Needs Analysis**

Organizations need to consider up front their readiness for training, i.e., whether the work environment can support the new skills and abilities learned in training. Measures of organizational climate for training transfer is one possible indicator of organizational readiness. Other human resource management processes may also require modification to be consistent

with and to support the training. Research assessments in this area may suggest that training delivery be delayed until sufficient organizational support is in place.

Knowledges, skills, and abilities that reflect what the popular literature means by “valuing and managing diversity” need to be identified. Some argue that valuing and managing diversity is simply part of a good manager’s repertoire of skills, while others feel there are quantitative and qualitative differences not captured in traditional taxonomies of managerial competencies. This step is critical because, in addition to serving as the basis for what will be trained, the knowledges, skills, and abilities are the criteria upon which the success of training will be measured.

Identifying who is most in need of training and most likely to benefit from training are also important issues. Research is needed to identify the best ways of assessing performance deficiencies to ensure training is provided to the appropriate recipients. Research on attitudinal and motivational factors that influence the outcomes of training will also help to identify up front who demonstrates a readiness for training.

### Training Design and Delivery

A review of the training research literature identified a number of factors that may influence the effectiveness of training, including trainer characteristics, training group composition and size, the length and scheduling of training, and time devoted to debriefing and process analysis. Research on the relative contributions of these factors on training effectiveness would help in maximizing the utility of training by eliminating some of the guesswork that currently exists regarding the design and conduct of the training programs.

Designing diversity training on the basis of theoretical research also provides a framework for investigating the effectiveness of training. For example, the attitude-behavior change literature specific to changing stereotypes and prejudices suggested that mixed groups of equal status individuals involved in a cooperative task had been a successful strategy for reducing prejudice, at least in the laboratory. Given its success in a laboratory environment, investigation of the effectiveness of this strategy in diversity training is worth pursuing.

### Training Output

As noted before, assessment of learning outcomes from a construct-oriented approach can contribute to determining why training was successful or unsuccessful. This information, in turn, can be used to make improvements to the training. Another critical research need is investigation of individual and organizational factors that hinder or promote the transfer of training back to the job.

### Training Outcomes

The possible outcomes specified in the diversity training evaluation model suggest several areas for research. Baseline information on organizational culture and climate could be used to assess long-term progress toward organizational results. Tracking organizational demographics provides an indication of how training (combined with, for example, trends in the available labor force, recruitment efforts, and career development programs) contributes to the increased representation of targeted groups. Research and analysis are also needed to establish benchmarks for training costs so that return on investment can be calculated more accurately.

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