**Abstract**

This workshop highlights 3D, immersive environments for teaching about inclusion/exclusion in the management classroom. Participants experience an exercise used in my inclusive leadership courses, involving 3D-immersive technology where students navigate a virtual "gallery" of information on the history and consequences of oppression in the community. Participants explore images and videos that provided information on systemic inequities, including the “redlining” of neighborhoods and resultant achievement and wealth gaps; and the police injustices experienced by BIPOC residents. The central activity involves witnessing digital storytelling from opposing perspectives on the experience of oppression. Reactions are collected and compared to data from classroom experience.

**Interest**

Today’s management students want tools and techniques that they can take into their workplaces and use the next day. Teaching about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), however, is typically the result of time-consuming processes in which the learner must understand their identity construction, the history of the constructs of inclusion and exclusion, and move toward understanding privilege, power, supremacy, unintended biases, micro-inequities, and micro-aggressions (Comerford, 2004). So, what should we focus on when teaching management students about DEI, and how can the learning be internalized and applied to their own current and future experiences?

Approaches to learning and development in DEI education vary widely, emphasizing the difficulty of the task, and the realization that there are different paradigmatic perspectives on how to grow inclusive behaviors. For example, Bendl, Bleijenbergh, Henttonen, Mills, Hearn, and Louvrier, J. (2015) stressed the importance of attending to intersectionality, while Pless and Maak (2004) highlighted the importance of understanding cultural norms and values, self-awareness, and awareness of others. Furman (2012), created a conceptual framework for leader preparation programs that include social justice as praxis, consisting of both reflection and action, with a focus on several “dimensions” including the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological. Scott, Heathcote, and Gruman (2011) emphasized the complexity of diversity and inclusion, and identified cultural readiness for change as the most important consideration for moving toward integrating diversity and inclusion in all systems.

The research on how to enact practical change toward more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizations is still emerging, and primarily consists of conceptual research drawing from existing theory (Boekhorst, 2015). Boekhorst utilized social information processing theory, for example, to conclude that several different efforts across an organization are needed to impact leader behavior and consequently, policies and practices such as performance management that motivate individual followers and groups (2015) to change behaviors.

There is a recognition that higher education needs better diversity education (Poch, Shaw, Williams, & Lee, 2012), but it is a one of the most difficult challenges, particularly in business school curriculum, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. There has been a surge in recent studies searching for innovative teaching approaches to diversity, including problem-based experiential learning, personal reflection, journals, logs, and communication in heterogeneous classrooms about identity (Grier, 2020).

Constructivist learning approaches such as 3D virtual environments have led to many contemporary studies espousing their usefulness (Chou & Hart, 2013; Chou & Hart, 2011; Bauman & Games, 2011). Recent research further demonstrates the value of using technology creatively to address difficult topics (Pigatt & Braman, 2021) with increasingly diverse student cohorts (Schaffer, 2017). However, immersive learning environments are complex and dynamic (Cheney & Terry, 2018) spaces.

In this workshop, I will describe and illustrate the pedagogical innovation of using a 3D immersive environment to simulate polarization in perspectives and the lived experiences of oppression that exist in our community. The objective of the exercise is to introduce undergraduate and graduate business students to concepts inequities and injustices, including statistics associated with the opportunity and achievement gaps, redlining, and specific experiences of bias and allyship. Participants in the workshop will have the opportunity to discuss the usefulness of these curricular innovations with management and organizational behavior students, and reactions will be explored through the deep description and thematic analysis conducted on student experiences.

Fifty-five students in two of my classes (36 undergraduate and 19 graduate) have completed the 3D immersive activity and the classes have concluded. I ran the exercise for both an MBA and undergraduate level inclusive leadership course in which students visited a 3D immersive educational environment that including images, documentation, maps, and narrated experience in a gallery format. This was followed by a synchronous, 3D-experience of a dialogue in which students heard opposing perspectives on events around race and racism occurring in the community. In addition to live reflection and discussion, the assignment includes a journaling activity to reflect on the whole experience.

**Session Description**

Step 1: 30 minutes

The aim of the exercise and this accompanying discussion is to understand the usefulness of 3D immersive technology as a novel instructional strategy for teaching about diversity and inclusion with business and management students. Participants in the workshop will see images of the immersive space, the design of the 3D environment, and the content it contains. In this workshop, we will view two videos illustrating polarizing perspectives on oppresion, reflect on the impact of such a learning approach on participants, and discusss its usefulness in management and organizational behavior classrooms.

Step 2: 30 minutes

I will describe my expereince in conducting the activity in these courses focused on inclusive leadership, explain how it is conducted, and the goals and objectives of the exercise. Students provided their reflections in a journaling assignment which have been thematically analyzed across graduate and undergraduate classes and will be shared.

I will also present a comparison of the reactions (through journal submissions) of undergraduates and graduate students to this newly employed instructional strategy and make recommendations on how to craft and implement such an activity most effectively in the management classroom.

Required technology include a computer station with screen, speaker and high-speed internet connection. Participants will not be entering the virtual space with their own avatars, rather, video and images will be observed (as a group) during the session.

**Takeaways**

Specific questions the exercise will attempt to answer are:

What is the experience of learning about race and racism when management students participate in 3D immersive virtual reality activities?

What are participant reactions to the exercise?

How can such exercises be most effectively implemented in the management classroom?

What differences exist in the experiences of graduate management students and undergraduate business students when experiencing immersive environments for education about diversity, equity, and inclusion/exclusion?

Participants will learn option for creating and conducting similar activities through the methods used in the example exercise. We will also discuss the various settings (courses) where this approach can be implemented.

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