Answers to in-text questions:

# Chapter 2: Diversity and Individual Differences

## **OB in the Real World: Kaia West**

### Critical Thinking Questions:

1. In the end, who benefits the most from a diverse workplace?
   1. The clients benefit because a diverse workplace enables the company to meet the diverse needs of the clients.
2. Kaia can do her job well, but what does she need to do to be totally successful in cultivating a diverse environment?
   1. She needs to get the rest of the firm to buy in! When everyone is supportive of an inclusive, diverse work environment then Kaia’s work will come to fruition.

## **Up for Debate: Diverse Business Environments Create Diverse Company Cultures**

Firms around the world, especially in the United States, are placing a huge emphasis on acquiring talent from diverse ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The claim is that building a diverse business environment directly translates into a culture of diverse and creative thinking, ultimately giving the firm a competitive advantage. Agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

Agree: Congregating people of diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking yields endless possibilities for a company. Employees will feel valued, and this will naturally incentivize contributing to the melting pot of ideas within the firm. There will be constant improvement that will push the firm far past its competitors.

Disagree: Valuing diversity is by no means wrong. People of all walks of life deserve an equal opportunity to contribute to a firm. In the same breath, it is essential that a balance between diversity and a firm’s overarching mission is found very early on. A company can lose sight of its mission by fostering a culture where any idea is to be given a chance. Disorganization and potentially even conflict are imminent in a culture that encourages challenging the status quo. The simple fact is that this can get out of hand too quickly if not closely monitored. Focus is absolutely crucial for any business, and the risks may actually outweigh the rewards.

## **Examining the Evidence: The HEXACO Model of Personality**

1. Why might it be important to consider the honesty-humility personality dimension in addition to the traditional Big Five dimensions?
   1. Answers will vary: I would think someone low on this dimension would be more likely to engage in negative or unethical behaviors at work.
2. What are some possible implications of the research findings outlined above for managerial practice?
   1. Answers will vary: Implications would be to try to hire honest/humble employees and have some screening mechanism for those that are low on this dimension.

## **Thinking Critically Questions**

### Diversity in OB

1. Explain why a diverse work group might score higher on innovation, creativity, and productivity than a group made up of similar individuals.

*a. A diverse work group provides different perspectives and opportunities for creative input above and beyond a nondiverse group. Any time you can approach a problem from multiple points of view, it gives a greater range of possibilities and a diverse mindset to assess and implement varying options.*

2. Identify and list at least three surface-level and three deep-level aspects of diversity that describe you. Then list three surface-level and three deep-level aspects of diversity that describe one of your good friends. How do the similarities and differences between you and your friend affect your friendship?

*a. Answers will vary. Surface-level—age, gender, and race. Deep level—attitudes, values, and personality. My friend is a 22-year-old woman from China. She is positive toward others, values friendship, and is quick to laugh. Similarities help us understand and identify with our friends, which subsequently deepens the relationship.*

3. Imagine that you work in an organization with a variety of people who differ from you in terms of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. Which diversity category would you find it most difficult to understand and bridge? Which diversity category would you find it easiest to understand and bridge? Explain your answer.

a. *Answers will vary. For me, I would struggle with someone of a different mental ability. Sometimes, it is difficult to identify these differences, and people are hesitant to discuss how it affects themselves and others. I think the easiest to understand and bridge is gender. There is a lot of common ground to build connections and enhance understanding.*

4. What criteria would you use to determine the effectiveness of a workplace diversity training program? List at least three separate measurable variables that you could evaluate if you were conducting research in this area.

a. *Answer: I would do a pretest to assess the level of need for the training and then compare that to a posttest to determine quality of training. One could measure attitudes toward diversity, understanding of diversity issues, and compliance with diversity training to assess effectiveness in diversity training.*

### The Importance of Individual Differences

1. Identify at least three types of individual differences related to each of the following categories: behavior, thought, and decision making.

*a. Three types of individual differences for behavior could be personality, attitudes, and ability. Three types of individual differences for thought could be education, IQ, and work experience. Three types of individual differences for decision making could include risk seeking, self-awareness, and feedback seeking.*

2. To illustrate your level of self-awareness and your awareness of others, imagine a scenario in which you are working under a tight deadline and a new coworker stops by your office and asks for help understanding a key report she needs submit to her manager. How are you likely to respond given your stress level and overall personality? How would your response affect a new employee who didn’t know you well?

a. *Answers will vary. I would see if I could help with the question quickly, if not, I would try to direct the coworker to another resource to help with the report. I would try to always respond because my personality would want to acknowledge her need but still finish my work. It is important to start with a good understanding with new employees, and effective communication is a good source for understanding.*

3. Briefly discuss your levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. What sort of an impact do these factors have on your ability to meet school and job expectations?

a. *Answers will vary. My level of self-esteem has gone up consistently as I get older and get more experience. Also my self-efficacy has increased as well as I learn new and better ways to approach tasks. If I don’t know how to do something, there are many sources of information to increase my self-efficacy. These factors are important to meet expectations in life, because confidence breeds performance.*

### Nature Versus Nurture

1. Describe your personality by listing seven to ten adjectives that illustrate your behavior and approach to life. Now imagine your opposite personality type by listing seven to ten adjectives that are diametrically opposed to those you listed for yourself.

a. *Answers will vary: My personality—introverted, logical, agreeable, conscientious, creative, affable, and calm. Opposite—extroverted, illogical, disagreeable, irresponsible, narrow-minded, grumpy, and anxious.*

2. If you were a researcher who believed that individual differences were primarily determined by nature (i.e., inherited and hard-wired), what common-sense arguments could you use to support your belief?

a. *Answers will vary: I would look at similarities between people and their parents and other family members. You can look at studies where twins are separated but have many of the same characteristics as their siblings.*

3. If you were a researcher who believed that individual differences were primarily determined by nurture (i.e., shaped by one’s upbringing and environment), what common-sense arguments could you use to support your belief?

a. *Answers will vary: I would look at similarities of how people are that spend a lot of time together. I would look at the how education and life experiences affect similarities with others. I would look at differences in family members based on differences in their environments.*

4. Argue for a middle ground to the nature vs. nurture debate. How would you support the belief that BOTH genetics and environment influence personality and differences?

a. *Answers will vary: Obviously both nature and nurture play an important role for the source of individual differences. You can combine the best of both sides to show that people are similar to their family/ancestry, and they also grow similar with exposure to new people and experiences. The influence of nature/nurture is different for everyone, but we can get better knowledge of their distinctions by continuing to study them in isolation and together.*

### Myers-Briggs-Type Indicator

1. How might knowing a coworker’s Myers–Briggs type help you to more effectively work with her or him? How might knowing a coworker’s Myers–Briggs type hinder your ability to work together?

a. *Answers will vary: It can provide a baseline of understanding of how that person may interact with others. It can be a negative as it may falsely categorize someone into a particular type because our personalities are very complex.*

2. What other preference categories in addition to energy, information, decisions, and lifestyle do you think could be helpful in typing personality? List at least two.

a. *Answers will vary: I think humor and self-awareness are helpful in typing personality.*

### The Big Five Model

1. Rank each of the Big Five dimensions of personality (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Agreeableness) in order of importance to workplace performance. Then rank them in order of importance to getting along well with others. Provide an explanation and defense for the two sets of rankings. and discuss the similarities and differences between the two.

a. *Answers will vary: I would rank them for work as Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Neuroticism, and Extraversion. I would rank them for getting along well with others as Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness to experience, and Conscientiousness. At work, being responsible is very important as is being agreeable with those at work. Being open to new experiences is valuable for enhancing job skills. Neuroticism is good in some situations but not good in others. Extraversion has the lowest input on job performance because you can still excel at any job despite being an introvert. The main difference between job performance and getting along well with others is that conscientiousness is not as important but still good, and being emotionally stable is very key as well. Other facets are useful but not as necessary in getting along with others.*

2. Pick one of the Big Five dimensions of personality, and describe a possible work scenario where an employee who rates high on the dimension you have chosen would be more effective at solving a conflict or problem than an employee who rates low on the dimension. Next, describe a different scenario where an employee rating low on the dimension would be more effective in solving a problem or conflict than an employee rating high on the dimension.

*a. Answers will vary: I think for a customer service job in which an employee has to interact directly with the customer, an agreeable employee would be much more effective than a disagreeable one. I think a disagreeable employee may be more effective in matters of the law and enforcing punishment than an agreeable one.*

### Other Personality Attributes

1. Imagine your ideal coworker based on where you fall on each of the dimensions of personality. Identify the dimensions where similarity would be most beneficial to an effective working relationship. Identify the dimensions where difference would likely benefit the relationship. Defend your answers.

a. *Answers will vary: My ideal coworker is risk-taking, Type A, proactive, high self-monitor, low Machiavellianism, and internal locus of control. Similarities in self-monitoring and Machiavellianism are important because misalignment can lead to bad situations. Differences in Type A/B and risk-taking are important to balance decision making and provide multiple perspectives.*

2. What sorts of industries or types of businesses would most value workers rating high on each of the six dimensions of personality. What sorts of industries or types of businesses would most value employees rating low on the six dimensions of personality. Are there any dimensions where a particularly low or particularly high rating would be an obstacle to satisfactory work performance regardless of the type of industry or business?

a. *Answers will vary: I would think examples of businesses would include race car driver (risk-taking), car salesman (Type A/B), customer service (proactive), model (self-monitoring), politician (Machiavellianism), and acting (locus of control). Being low in proactivity would generally be detrimental as would being high in Machiavellianism.*