

Summary Report – Steve Brady
International Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations
Vienna, Austria
July 8-12, 2014

This summer I had the opportunity and privilege to attend the 14th Annual International Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations. It was held in the beautiful and cosmopolitan city of Vienna, Austria. I was among 250 higher education professionals who attended representing 35 different countries. The conference was hosted by the Vienna University of Economics and Business and was designed to examine the concept of diversity as a positive aspect of a global world and globalized society, while bringing together scholarly, government and practice-based participants.

The gathering supported professionals who had the intention to move away from simple affirmations that “diversity is good” and support a much more nuanced account of the effects and uses of diversity on differently situated communities. In total, there were 178 papers and workshops offered to participants at the conference and divided into four main thematic areas indicated below:

- Theme 1: Identity and Belonging
- Theme 2: Education and Learning in a World of Differences
- Theme 3: Organizational Diversity
- Theme 4: Community Diversity and Governance

At the conference I had the opportunity to present a workshop entitled “Authentic Leadership through Understanding and Confronting Personal Biases.” In this workshop, participants experienced several multi-media clips and interactive exercises which helped them examine basic assumptions and biases toward different groups of people. Throughout the workshop participants were interactive and asked questions showing strong interest in the subject matter. One participant from Cairo, Egypt stirred intense dialogue among the group after viewing a media clip in which a Caucasian male had a casual encounter with an Asian female asking the pointed question “Where are you really from?”. As the facilitator of the discussion, I observed some uncomfortable glances from the group who seemed to be unfamiliar with this type of racism and micro-aggressive behavior.

Attending this conference was a great opportunity for me as an OSU Extension professional. I can honestly say that I took advantage of all the conference had to offer and returned to my job with a tremendous amount of appreciation and interest in the breadth and scope of work being done in the multiple facets of diversity work around the world. The content of the presentations and the ability to share and learn from professionals around the world helped me expand my “global-mindedness” and concept of what it means to include diversity in my everyday programming here in Ohio. I returned to my job as a 4-H Youth Development Educator in Warren County with a renewed sense of the purpose to develop and expand my educational teaching to include those segments of my community that are underserved by our county programming. In the next year, I plan to actively identify new areas of growth and expand my scholarship in the area of my diversity specialization. I want to thank the many entities that provided funds for me to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.