FOCAL ARTICLE

Professionalizing Diversity and Inclusion Practice: Should Voluntary Standards Be the Chicken or the Egg?

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Abstract

Workplace diversity and inclusion (D & I) practices today are based to a great extent on unevaluated experience and intuition rather than empirical evidence. Would voluntary professional practice standards in this field help to raise the level of current and future practice? Or would they be premature? If developed under 4 principles we describe, we predict the former. However, this positive outcome will also require industrial and organizational (I–O) psychologists to join their D & I colleagues in expanding research on D & I practices, strengthening the skills of D & I practitioners, assisting employers to avoid self-incrimination, and enhancing employer commitment to D & I itself. I–O psychologists should also be aware of other implications of D & I practice standards for their work.

Diversity and inclusion (D & I) initiatives are now prominent among the employment practices with which many industrial and organizational (I–O) psychologists work. It is rare to attend a workplace-oriented conference without meeting multiple providers offering diversity training; to view an employer's website without encountering a ''diversity'' link; or to complete a consulting assignment without hearing about the client's ''employee resource groups,'' celebrations of diverse cultures, and ''business case for diversity.'' At least half of all U.S. companies with over 100 employees have some form of D & I program, including more than 75% of the largest firms, with expenditures on these activities estimated to total $10 billion annually. An estimated 5,000 practitioners deliver these services (Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001; Forbes, 1997; Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2010b), a number rivaling Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's (SIOP) own 7,000 active members.

Unfortunately, many D & I activities are not equal to the scale and complexity of the problems they are intended to address. These problems include conscious and unconscious workplace discrimination against women, racial/ethnic minorities, older persons, persons with disabilities, and other groups (Bendick, 2007). They also include widespread employer failure to engender employee engagement and fully utilize talent among employees of diverse backgrounds (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009).

In some cases, employers initiate D & I activities primarily for public relations benefits or ''feel good'' reasons, with little concern about their effectiveness. In more typical situations, however, employers are sincere, but their efforts are to some major degree ineffective (Hirsh & Kmec, 2009; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Kochan et al., 2003).

As this article will discuss, in large part, this weak performance reflects a shortage of solid, evidence-based information to guide these initiatives. D & I programs are commonly based on practitioners' unevaluated experience and intuition, with the primary rationale for each employer's D & I strategy often little more than ''that's what other employers are doing.'' Best practice advice offered in books, the trade press, and conference presentations is often loosely described, seldom formally evaluated, sometimes contradictory, and almost always problematic to transfer among workplaces. Although a more rigorously conceptual, evidence-based state of the art is slowly emerging, this body of research is only beginning to accumulate, let alone influence D & I practice.

In this article we argue that in these circumstances, properly-developed voluntary professional standards for D & I practice can significantly advance the effectiveness of D & I activities in both the short and the long run. These standards would thereby promote the fair, efficient workplaces to which I–O psychologists are professionally committed.

In reaching this conclusion, we first briefly review the current state of D & I practice. We then propose four principles for the development and implementation of voluntary professional standards for this field that, if followed, are likely to produce standards that are effective in raising the level of professional practice. However, we also identify four barriers that must be overcome to support standards' effectiveness. In closing, we enumerate opportunities for I–O psychologists to participate in addressing these barriers, as well as other ways in which D & I standards are likely to affect their work.

D & I as an Evolving Workplace Practice

In early usage during the 1980s, the term ''diversity'' typically referred to demographic differences among people in the workforce on visible characteristics such as gender, race, age, and disability. This approach reflected the evolution of diversity work out of the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, which granted dramatic new legal protection against employment discrimination for these groups.

Even in those early days, however, the nascent diversity movement looked beyond this legal focus. In fact, some observers attribute the emergence of diversity management in the corporate world during the 1980s directly to the weakening of the legal approach at that time, reflecting an increasingly conservative political climate, court decisions unfavorable to affirmative action, and the sometimes-discouraging unintended consequences of litigation. ''Diversity programs came into being in part as a response to this legal vacuum. Astute business people realized there were problems of discrimination in the workplace, and the law was not then a significant force in addressing them'' (Paskoff, 1996, p. 47; see also Dobbin, 2009).

In contrast to a legal orientation, D & I practitioners emphasized the role of D & I efforts in supporting employers' operational needs and business goals. Initially, these practitioners' ''business case for diversity'' emphasized demographic trends that were interpreted (or misinterpreted) to predict that women and minorities would soon outnumber white males in the labor force, instead of among its *net new entrants* (DiThomaso & Friedman, 1995; Johnston & Packer, 1987). Because employers would increasingly have no choice but to rely on such supposed ''newcomers'' as their workforce, it was argued, employers needed to learn how to manage them productively (Kochan et al., 2003; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). In addition, advocates of diversity management argued that employee diversity would open doors to new customers

and expanded sales, and that diversity in work teams would enhance employees' productivity and creativity (Cox, 1997; Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Since the 1980s, the concept of workplace diversity has evolved in both scope and sophistication. On the simplest level, this evolution has added demographic characteristics to be considered in the workplace—for example, religious practices, family status, and sexual orientation. In a more complex way, and not without controversy, some D & I efforts now encompass "invisible" differences among individuals on dimensions such as educational background, functional specialty, work style, personality traits, and thinking styles (Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012; Hays-Thomas, 2004). In this spirit, we offer a contemporary, expansive but functional definition of diversity as the mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organization.

The last part of this definition—recognizing that personal attributes are likely to affect employees' acceptance, performance, satisfaction, or progress—signals a profound reorientation in diversity thought: the emerging insight that what matters in managing workforce diversity is not only employee characteristics *per se* but also the way others—such as fellow employees, customers, and the managers of the employing organization itself—respond to those characteristics. Since the 1990s, that shift in thinking has commonly led to pairing the term "inclusion" with "diversity" in everything from scholarly writing (e.g., Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004) to the titles carried by employers' diversity staff. In this pairing, diversity continues to draw attention to the characteristics of an employer's work*force*, whereas inclusion focuses new attention on the policies, practices, and climate of the work*place*—the workplace culture—that shapes the experiences of employees with those characteristics. For example, one current definition describes inclusion as "the

degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265).

This emphasis on *employers' responses* to employee characteristics in large part arose out of the shortcomings of many early D & I efforts, with their emphasis on employee recruitment and on visible employee characteristics. Early efforts at targeted recruitment for women and minorities often did not produce sustainable change in workplaces' demographic composition, let alone the increased productivity, creativity, and sales that these changes in workforce demographics were supposed to unleash (Davidson, 2011; Thomas, 1990). Concurrently, early efforts at "diversity awareness" training for supervisors and employees often engendered resentment and created intergroup conflict rather than the intended workplace harmony (Cross, 2000; Hemphill & Haines, 1997).

Diagnosing these disappointing results, it was observed that in these efforts, "newcomer" employees were commonly expected to assimilate to the norms of the dominant group and the existing workplace culture. The failure of these initiatives suggested that to maintain and benefit from workforce diversity, employers had to create a more inclusive workplace by changing their own perceptions, attitudes, practices, and behavior in ways that would lead people of difference to become fully accepted and equitably rewarded in the employment setting (Cox, 1997; Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012; Ross, 2011).

All this activity, including both successes and failures, has attracted some of the rigorous evaluations and careful research that I–O psychologists and other workplace advisors would hope to have to guide such efforts. Some studies have used laboratory simulations or analogues of the workplace to infer the likely workplace effects of D & I initiatives (e.g., Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick,

& Esses, 2010). Other research has implemented quasi-experiments and other structured research designs in real workplaces. For example, several studies have sought to measure the impact and identify correlates of success for the most common D & I initiative, diversity training (e.g., Bendick et al., 2001; Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Kalev et al., 2006). Other work has attempted the same for other common D & I activities such as demographically targeted recruitment and mentoring or improved diversity climate (e.g., Kulik & Roberson, 2008; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009; Pitts, 2009). Still other studies have analyzed the effects on employee absenteeism and turnover, productivity, innovation, sales, or market share of a workforce's demographic composition (e.g., Ely, 2004; Frink et al., 2003; Herring, 2009; Jackson & Joshi, 2004; Leonard, Levine, & Joshi, 2004).

Within this final group, the boldest, although not necessarily the most rigorous, research has investigated the relationship between companies' workforce demographics and those firms' ''bottom line,'' measured by profitability or stock prices. For instance, one study of *Fortune 500* publicly traded companies found that the top 25% of these firms in terms of women in senior management generated returns to their stockholders that were more than 30% higher than the returns generated by their peers in the bottom 25% (Catalyst, 2004; see also Hersch, 1991; Wright, Ferris, Hiller, & Kroll, 1995).

Unfortunately, such quantitative, controlled empirical analyses represent a minority of work within the current D & I state of the art. In designing and implementing their initiatives, most employers rely more on personal experience, theoretical reasoning, and case studies of ''success stories'' in other workplaces. Such guidance is readily available from trade magazines (e.g., *DiversityInc*, *Diversity Executive*, and *Profiles in Diversity*), how-to books (e.g., Cox, 2001; Ross, 2011; Theiderman, 2008), case studies (e.g., Anand & Winters, 2008), textbooks (e.g., Bell, 2007; Carr-Ruffino, 2009; Mor Barak, 2011), and conferences and training organized by consultants or human resource professional organizations (e.g., Society for Human Resource Management, the Conference Board). Instant access via the Internet to a proliferating number of D & I blogs and chat groups further expands this flood of unscreened advice.

Anyone seeking to draw on these varied sources of information to design practical D & I policies and practices faces difficulties in separating correct recommendations from incorrect ones, identifying which advice is based on hard evidence, and understanding under what conditions the advice will apply. This final consideration is particularly important and yet widely overlooked. I–O psychologists are well aware that the effects of any employer action may vary depending on the organizational context into which it is introduced. Yet diversity case studies seldom explicitly examine the conditions for transferability of one successful experience to other workplaces.

One mechanism for improving knowledge and practice in such situations is development of formal standards for professional practice. We now turn to that approach.

Standards as a Strategy to Improve D & I Practice

A conclusion that might be drawn from the previous section is that setting standards for D & I practice at this time is premature. Until the field has developed a more extensive, rigorous body of knowledge, promulgating standards might enshrine folklore rather than science and proliferate rather than eliminate inefficient, ineffective, or harmful activities. Moreover, conformity to these standards might discourage experimentation that could lead to new, better practices. Alternatively, employers might tend to ignore the standards because compliance will often require significant expenditures of dollars, staff time, and managerial attention for which there is little definitive evidence of a positive return. *Voluntary* standards would seem to be particularly vulnerable to the fate of being ignored.

However, the process by which standards exercise their influence on professional practice is more complex than such simple predictions assume. Even supposedly mandatory standards are often ignored. For example, in many states psychology licensure is legally required to engage in certain types of work in the field of I–O psychology. However, some I–O psychologists appear to consider this process applicable only to clinicians, even when state law does not recognize that distinction. Conversely, supposedly voluntary standards sometimes command essentially universal compliance. For instance, although accreditation of universities and other programs in higher education is nominally voluntary, it is often *de facto* necessary when students in unaccredited institutions may not have access to financial aid and graduates of unaccredited programs may not be eligible for certification, licensure, or employment in their field of study.

The findings of research on past standards-setting efforts are similarly complex. When establishing consistency or compatibility on technical issues in well-established fields such as accounting or engineering, many of these efforts have been judged both influential and beneficial (Murphy & Yates, 2009; see also www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/benefitsof standards). In more emergent fields such as corporate social responsibility, environmental stewardship, or international labor standards, the record is more mixed. In some corporations, efforts to meet such standards have triggered major improvements in the firms' policies and practices, but other corporations have obtained the public relations benefits of meeting standards despite essentially no changes in their behavior (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005; Egan, Mauleon, Wolff, & Bendick, 2009; Helms, Oliver, & Webb, 2012; Koehler, 2007; Yin & Shmeidler, 2009).

Particularly in a relatively immature field such as D & I, there is some potential for practice standards to perpetuate errors, be ineffectual, or lead to some combination of both these undesirable outcomes.

Nevertheless, on balance, we believe that the opposite can be achieved. The authors are members of a task force of the SHRM that since 2011 has been crafting standards for D & I programs, D & I metrics, and chief D & I officers. On the basis of this experience and on other recent instances of standard-setting in the behavioral sciences, we propose four general principles that, if followed, should increase the likelihood of producing successful standards in fields such as D & I.

Participant qualifications and resources. The first principle concerns the qualifications of the individuals who participate in the standards-setting deliberations. Ideally, standards are developed by individuals with considerable breadth and depth of professional knowledge in the field for which the standards are being developed. Collectively, the group should have direct experience in the variety of settings to which the standards may be applied, including these settings' competitive pressures, economic challenges, and political forces. The group should also include persons familiar with empirical research relevant to the standards and capable of judging the credibility of this research. Participants should also collectively possess an awareness of deficiencies or problems in the field for which new standards may be a quality improvement strategy. The group therefore needs to be large enough to encompass all these diverse perspectives. The *Guidelines for Education and Training* developed by SIOP for doctoral (SIOP, 1999a) and masters education (SIOP, 1994 [1999b]) illustrate the inclusion of a wide and representative group in the standards development and review process.

Information beyond that possessed by individuals on the standard-setting team is often also required. The personal knowledge of task force members may not encompass all relevant empirical evidence from scientifically controlled studies. In medicine, for example, new research frequently causes panels of experts to override their personal clinical practices in setting standards for patient treatment. Therefore,

systematic reviews of relevant research are typically an appropriate part of the standards-setting process. In this spirit, our working group on D & I metrics commissioned a literature survey (Ramsay, 2012b) to ensure broad, unbiased exposure to relevant research and current practices on relevant metrics and the conditions for their effectiveness. This survey helped our group form shared understandings concerning the current state of the art and what was needed to foster improvement.

Group processes. Rich participant background and information is of little use, of course, if the deliberative process does not ensure that a multiplicity of voices is heard and that available information is systematically considered. Ideally, the individuals involved in standards setting possess the organizational and interpersonal skills needed to participate effectively in a collaborative process in which consensus may not be easy to achieve. In addition, the standards development process itself must apply effective procedures for conducting complex group interactions. For example, explicit ground rules should be developed in advance to ensure that that dissenting voices are heard, knowledge of group members is cooperatively shared, and the final product represents an uncoerced consensus of the group, at least on major points. If the standards development task is so large that it must be subdivided among subcommittees, the work of the various groups must be coordinated so that it can be readily combined. Structured deliberative processes such as explicit agreement on definitions and criteria, timelines for specific accomplishments, and procedures for voting, as well as public posting of drafts for review and comment, should be helpful. Careful deliberative consideration of dissenting views can help to control tendencies for *groupthink*, in which pressure for conformity can lead to poor decisions (Baron, 2005; Janis, 1982).

Times, methods, and places for participation should be chosen to allow the widest participation by members. If the number and geographic distribution of participants precludes face-to-face interaction, then user-friendly electronic means of conferencing, communicating, and document review should be used. The challenges of managing full and meaningful participation when the group is large, widely distributed across time zones, and varying in perspective should not be underestimated.

In the case of SHRM's current work on D & I standards, the standards-setting process is overseen by the American National Standards Institute, ANSI (www.ansi.org), a nonprofit organization governed by organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Since 1918, ANSI has convened the U.S. standards and uniformity assessment community in establishing standards on topics ranging from safe handling of dangerous chemicals to procedures for calculating the impact of industry restructuring on energy prices. It is the United States representative to the International Standards Organization (ISO). This long experience has been distilled into a set of formal ANSI procedures that address many of these issues (SHRM, 2010a).

Relationships with stakeholders. A third principle of standards development concerns the relationship between the standards developing group and the stakeholders to whom the standards, when promulgated, will be relevant. For standards to be accepted in practice, multiple stakeholders typically must recognize the legitimacy of the development group and the ''value added'' by their expertise.

At the time they were developed, SIOP's *Guidelines for Education and Training* (1994, 1999a) were seen as an appropriate and helpful contribution within the graduate training community. This conclusion was probably a result of legitimacy and respect for SIOP's Education and Training committees and their members in this area of activity. In the case of the current SHRM work on D & I standards, this objective is advanced by the fact that the process has been organized by the largest human resources professional organization

in the United States, SHRM, under the aegis of a long-established, widely recognized standard-setting organization, ANSI.

On human resource management matters such as D & I, credibility to stakeholders outside the human resource management field is particularly important. Within the organizations that employ them, D & I practitioners typically rank relatively low in the organization's hierarchy both formally and informally. It is common for D & I practitioners to be subordinate to human resources (SHRM, 2011), which itself is typically not a major center of power and influence. That placement makes the impact of D & I efforts strongly dependent on *general* management's approval and support.

Contemporary thinking about how to be persuasive with general management often emphasizes managers' responsiveness to the multiple networks of stakeholders in which they are enmeshed (Egan et al., 2009; Springman, 2011). Instead of considering an organization such as a corporation as an autonomous decision maker, this perspective focuses attention on the influence of other actors on corporate decisions. For D & I, influential stakeholders typically include current employees, potential employees, public policy advocates, unions, customers, and clients, investors and investment advisors, government regulators, litigators, insurers, and the news media.

These stakeholders can be particularly persuasive in supporting initiatives when the stakeholders have clear, manageable "litmus tests" to articulate their preferences to employers and judge employer compliance. Within psychology, for example, states commonly use graduation from an APA accredited program as a substitute for direct assessment of a licensure applicant's educational background. "Are you meeting the SHRM D & I standards?" can provide that same sort of quick, clear stakeholder-empowering test.

The SHRM approach to D & I standards contrasts sharply with currently available alternatives for identifying good D & I

performance, including widely publicized rankings such as those of DiversityInc., *Black Enterprise* magazine, or *Working Mother* magazine. Investigations of the validity of such rankings have found them "more often an exercise in reputation building than they are an illustration of diversity as a tool for organizational transformation" (Metzler, 2012, p. 42). The rankings often lack clear conceptualization, transparent standards, and verified data. Some rankings may also be biased by financial considerations for their sponsoring publications (although systematic evidence of this point remains elusive).

Public review of draft standards offers particularly significant opportunities to develop support among important stakeholders. However diverse the group involved in drafting standards, initial drafts often fail to take full account of all relevant perspectives. For instance, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) promulgated by the American Psychiatric Association is widely used outside psychiatry (American Psychiatric Association, 2012b). It was therefore appropriate that after revised standards had been drafted by persons within the psychiatry profession, the standards were opened to review by persons with backgrounds outside psychiatry. As a result of this broader review, some changes were made (American Psychiatric Association, 2012a; Szalavitz, 2012). But of equal importance is the fact that, through this review process, the availability of the revised standards was widely announced and credibility among a wide range of potential users was enhanced.

Continuous improvement. A fourth principle for successful development of standards such as those for D & I is to consider the potential of initial standards for accelerating development of new knowledge improving those standards over the long run. Opportunities to incorporate research findings into improved standards create an incentive for academics and other researchers to focus their attention on these issues. Explicit standards can be translated directly

into hypotheses to be tested in rigorous evaluation studies. Adoption by multiple employers of standards-conforming practices can be coordinated to create quasi-experiments in which the effects of a single ''treatment condition'' can be compared in different organizational environments. It is essential that standards in a relatively new, rapidly evolving field such as D & I offer opportunities for innovation and experimentation, including provisions for meeting the standards in alternative ways. The standards-setting process should also call for periodic review and revision of the standards as knowledge and experience continue to accumulate.

Amplifying the Benefits of D & I Standards

Assuming the four principles just described are adhered to, we would predict that major benefits should result from setting voluntary standards for D & I professional practices *now*. However, to ensure that the resulting standards generate these benefits, at least four circumstances related to D & I will need to be addressed simultaneously with the standards-setting effort itself.

The quality of existing research. The first circumstance is the predominantly soft state of existing research on D & I. As this article has discussed, and multiple reviews or compilations of this material confirm (e.g., Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Brief, 2008; Chrobot-Mason, Konrad, & Linnehan, 2006; Davidson, 2011; Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Egan & Bendick, 2008; Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012; Henry & Evans, 2007; Ramsay, 2012a; Ramsay, 2012b; Stockdale & Crosby, 2004; Thomas, 2008; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2001), conceptually clear, empirically rigorous research in this field is relatively limited.

One review (Chugh & Brief, 2008, p. 4) attributes this dearth to researchers' perceptions that research on D & I is ''touchy,'' ''difficult,'' ''unimportant,'' and ''abstract.'' Certainly the adjective ''touchy'' is often appropriate. Almost anything related to race, gender, and other demographic fault lines in American society remains highly controversial in individual workplaces as well as national politics. Boundaries of political correctness and safety from litigation are easily inadvertently crossed.

The description ''difficult'' is also often justified. The most influential D & I research tends to be conducted in real workplaces, and obtaining employer cooperation for those studies often requires a prolonged search for willing employers and complex negotiations with these employers. Equally, in actual workplaces, it is typically difficult to control the multiple complex and often unpredictable factors confounding the experimental treatment.

However, the two remaining researcher perceptions—''unimportant'' and ''abstract''—are definitely not justified. Corporate CEO's surveyed in 2012 about the greatest challenges their organizations will face over the next 12 months named efficient mobilization of human capital among their top three challenges, equal to global political/economic risk and the dizzying pace of technological innovation (Mitchell, Ray, & van Ark, 2012). Given the reality of ongoing and even accelerating demographic changes in the American workforce, D & I is an unavoidable aspect of that mobilization. Researchers who move D & I from the margins to a prominent place in their studies will find a strong market among senior managers for evidence-based findings.

Practitioner skill. A second circumstance that requires addressing is the limited skill sets of many D & I practitioners. In particular, many practitioners have very limited backgrounds in the rich behavioral science literature, including that in I–O psychology, that provides the conceptual foundations of effective D & I practice (Lahiri, 2008). To the extent that these practitioners have formal coursework relevant to D & I, the content of that training has typically emphasized the circumstances of individual demographic groups (e.g., historic and contemporary sources of racial and gender

disadvantage) rather than analytical tools for use in practical organizational development work. This emphasis is clear from perusing most contemporary D & I textbooks (e.g., Bell, 2007, or Carr-Ruffino, 2009) and course syllabi (division.aom online.org/gdo/teaching_syllabi_g.htm).

Typical gaps in practitioners' analytic and conceptual background include statistical analysis beyond the rudimentary, techniques for validating employee selection and assessment practices, the construction or evaluation of psychometrically sound metrics, the psychology and sociology of stereotyping and in-group bias, and best practices in fomenting organizational development. For these practitioners to become informed implementers of the more conceptually based approaches to D & I practice that standards should promote, these skills need upgrading through relevant degree programs as well as more rigorous short courses, conference presentations, and in-service training.

Litigation concerns. A third circumstance to be addressed is the legal issue of self-incrimination. For employers, any analysis, policy, or practice having to do with the employee characteristics prominently addressed in D & I, such as race and gender, raises concerns about liability for violating employment discrimination laws. In particular, employers commonly fear that gathering and analyzing data to motivate and guide D & I initiatives may document employment problems that help potential plaintiffs build a case against them. Moreover, when these analyses are reported to senior management and remedial actions are not taken, the fact that management was made aware but did not act may be cited as evidence that alleged discriminatory acts were intentional, potentially creating additional legal liability and enhanced monetary damages. In the deliberations of our SHRM D & I working group, our colleagues recounted multiple incidents in which, to avoid such situations, employers restrict D & I analyses, for example by disallowing cross-tabulation of the responses to employee engagement surveys by the race and gender of respondents.

Four decades ago some courts began to recognize the adverse effects of such concerns on the public policy objective of having individuals and organizations confidentially evaluate their own legal compliance and self-correct problems without outside intervention. These courts enunciated a so-called ''self-critical analysis privilege,'' exempting some self-revelatory data and candid assessments from being used as incriminating evidence in litigation. Initially enunciated in the context of medical peer review, this doctrine has, in some cases, been extended to employment practices as well (Pollard, 1999; Simpson, 1996).

However, many courts have been hesitant to offer this privilege in the employment context. For example, the demographic profile of an employer's workforce contained in annual EEO-1 reports required of larger employers or affirmative action plans required of federal contractors are generally open to discovery by plaintiffs. So, often, are voluntary D & I analyses by employers—for example, the results of the popular ''implicit association'' tests for measuring unconscious bias among managers (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Pollard, 1999).

We by no means advocate indiscriminately privileging all employer self-analyses on D & I issues and employment practices. That would create perverse incentives to analyze issues on which the employer has no intention of taking action merely to place potentially damaging information under wraps. But we do feel that the pendulum has perhaps swung too far in the opposite direction. D & I work, in particular, often requires probing, candid analyses to motivate employers to act and to identify appropriate actions. Particularly with respect to very complex D & I issues—for example an organization's overall corporate culture or managers' unconscious biases—the appropriate remedial actions are often not simple or obvious, and more latitude in protecting self-critical analyses would be productive (Pollard, 1999).

Perceived importance of D & I. The fourth circumstance that requires addressing is the credibility of the D & I field itself among the senior managers who decide what role it will play in their organizations. According to one recent survey, only 53% of the CEOs in a representative sample of employers believed diversity is important. Concurrently, only 28% of senior diversity managers in these organizations agreed that diversity enhances their organization's competitiveness, and only 16% believed that it enhances their organization's "bottom line" (SHRM, 2010b). In apparent contradiction, a different survey cited earlier (Mitchell, Ray, & van Ark, 2012) showed the relative importance granted to "efficient mobilization of human capital." This suggests a need for framing D & I work and its rationale and benefits in a broader context.

Still, given the discussion throughout this article about the generally suboptimal state of D & I practices today, managerial skepticism undoubtedly has some basis in reality. To raise the level of D & I practice is, of course, the principal goal of the standards we are advocating. However, the current level of skepticism could catch D & I standards in a chicken and egg dilemma, with low effectiveness reflecting low standards and therefore reducing organizations' willingness to invest in meeting the standards that would enhance effectiveness.

Perhaps the most promising way to break this paralyzing cycle of skepticism is to continue to recast D & I itself, distancing it even further from its historic association with antidiscrimination law and emphasizing even more forcefully its foundations in managerial and behavioral science disciplines such as I–O psychology. This would require even more aggressively shifting the emphasis, described earlier in this article, from work*force* diversity toward work*place* inclusion. In turn, this change would require major changes in attitudes throughout the D & I community, including abandonment or modification of some well-established D & I practices such as the content of the business case for diversity (e.g., Bendick,

Egan, & Lanier, 2010; Kochan et al., 2003; Litvin, 2006; Thomas & Ely, 1996). D & I standards can play a powerful role in defining and disseminating this shift.

Relevance of These Standards to I–O Psychologists

We suggest that direct participation of I–O psychologists in the development of D & I standards would enhance the quality of criteria that emerge from standards-setting processes such as those of the current SHRM task force.

In addition, I–O psychologists can advance the standards development process by helping to address the four circumstances just discussed:

- I–O psychology researchers can put D & I issues at the center of their research agendas.
- I–O faculty can encourage D & I practitioners to take I–O courses or obtain I–O degrees, perhaps by adding to I–O curricula courses explicitly labeled D & I.
- I–O trainers can repackage their materials and messages to make explicit the relevance to D & I and reach out to D & I audiences in conference and in-service settings.
- I–O practitioners can thoughtfully debate the proper scope of the self-assessment privilege and become public spokespersons for appropriate revisions. SIOP and the field of I–O psychology have substantial credibility on such subjects with decision makers such as the courts, congressional committees, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and this credibility can be mobilized in this effort.
- I–O thought leaders can bring their discipline's well-developed conceptual perspectives to bear as active participants in the debate within the D & I field about issues such as the proper balance between "diversity thinking" and "inclusion thinking."

Even I–O psychologists who do not actively direct their work in these ways should be prepared to have emergent D & I standards affect their work in important ways. For example:

- Those engaged in organizational consulting may be asked to advise client organizations on whether to undertake the work necessary to meet D & I practice standards and to assist in doing so. This latter effort would likely require development of new measurement and analysis techniques.
- Those engaged in research may see expanded opportunities for high-quality field research, perhaps in multiresearcher consortia (e.g., Kochan et al., 2003). Many intriguing research questions have already emerged from the standards-setting process: Where do concepts such as D & I fit in the nomological network of established constructs such as fairness, social identity, and in-group status? What characterizes organizations that aspire to meet voluntary D & I standards? What organizational consequences ensue when an employer seeks to meet such standards?
- Those engaged in education may be called on to rethink what curricula and academic experiences best prepare students to work in the field of D & I, how high-quality learning can be made available to graduates already employed in D & I, and what linkages can be developed between scholarly I–O literature and the real-world challenges facing organizations addressing issues of D & I.

In grappling with these multiple challenges, I–O psychologists can importantly advance the professional goals they share with D & I practitioners: workplaces that are both efficient and equitable, and great places to work for employees of all backgrounds.

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