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COMMENTARY

Recommendation: Add a competency on diversity and inclusion

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The focal article by Köhler et al. (2020) is an excellent start to a discussion about how we prepare reviewers for peer review in our journals and beyond. Our response has little disagreement with what is present in the focal article. Instead, we focus on what is omitted: a competency regarding diversity and inclusion (D&I). To that end, we describe a proposed competency, explain why it is important, and provide several examples regarding how this competency might play out in review of manuscripts and in other review settings.

Why is a competency for diversity and inclusion necessary?

Research in the industrial and organizational (I-O) domain is not representative of the labor market (Bergman & Jean, 2016) and tends to focus on the experiences of workers in the U.S. workforce, overlooking experiences from around the world (Myers, 2016). Despite the fact that many of our samples are college-educated individuals (e.g., undergraduates, professionals, managers, executives; Bergman & Jean, 2016), 38.6% of the U.S. workforce did not have any education beyond high school in 2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In order to remain relevant, interesting, more generalizable, and more applicable, work in the field of I-O psychology needs to consider issues related to class, job type, educational level, international status, and beyond.

A competency in diversity (i.e., ways that individuals are different and unique, including the constructs of race, gender, religion, age, nationality, sexual orientation, ability status, parental status, class, education, and beyond; Jordan, 2011) and inclusion (i.e., fostering a climate that allows for diverse individuals to collaborate and connect; Jordan, 2011) would help I-O psychology research become more representative of the labor force, which should in turn make I-O psychology research more applicable and useful to organizations. Notably, we are arguing for competency in D&I issues in *all* I-O psychology research, not just in the D&I subfield. As scientists, we need to consider whether our research is responsive and responsible to issues of D&I in the domains of interest.

Additionally, we need to address the issue of our own privilege (in terms of level of education, access to resources, etc.) and bias, as well as the privilege of those who have been included in I-O research (white collar, educated, White workers) and the biases that exist in our knowledge base. Confronting this privilege is uncomfortable and can be an area of uncertainty for individuals who are unfamiliar with issues related to D&I. The establishment of a formalized competency related to D&I helps alleviate some of this discomfort.

The proposed competency for diversity and inclusion

A competency for D&I belongs in the foundational knowledge area of the framework and would read something like this:

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Diversity and Inclusion. *Reviewers need to have respect for diversity and inclusion as well as the ability to critically evaluate scientific endeavors relative to diversity and inclusion in order to ensure that the research conducted in the field of I-O psychology remains relevant to the current, various, and evolving experiences of workers and organizations. To this end, reviewers should: (a) have up-to-date familiarity with key constructs, theories, and findings regarding diverse populations; (b) understand that studying the experiences of individuals from non-Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) populations and countries may lead to findings that seem counterintuitive or unexpected in the face of the established literature; (c) recognize that sampling, methods, statistical analyses, and study implementation should be affected by the population of interest and the D&I issues therein; (d) acknowledge intersectionality; (e) acknowledge that all people are affected by unconscious biases and should therefore be constantly vigilant to the impact of these biases on their judgment, and be sensitive to the positionality of the author(s), participants, and themselves (i.e., as reviewers).*

Location in the framework

Probably the most controversial part of our proposal is the placement of the competency as foundational knowledge. Some readers might think that this is a supplement to the competency of Open-Mindedness in the Professionalism cluster. Certainly, some of this definition is linked to open-mindedness. Reviewers who are skilled in the D&I competency will probably also need to be skilled in open-mindedness, as a truly diverse and inclusive body of I-O psychology research will use new topics and techniques, come in different forms than our typical approaches, and draw different conclusions than the received findings. However, this competency is more than ensuring that reviewers are open-minded about diverse samples, settings, and ideas. Instead, it is about recognizing that our participants are people who have a history and a context before they arrive at our study; we cannot possibly make reasonably accurate predictions about workplaces if our samples do not reflect this, and we cannot propose reasonable hypotheses without acknowledging this.

The D&I competency belongs in foundational knowledge because reviewers competent in D&I must know the current knowledge base in order to understand what is missing. I-O psychologists have devoted considerable journal space in our Discussion sections, pondering what might be if we were to cross the boundary conditions of the current study. A reviewer competent in D&I will be familiar with these boundary conditions and these suppositions. Further, it is foundational knowledge because as diversity of samples—within and across studies—increases, there is a good chance that there will be important caveats to well-known findings and theories. Reviewers who are well-versed in both the currently established perspectives and D&I issues can better evaluate whether divergent hypotheses and findings are due to true score or chance/error. Finally, it is foundational knowledge because there are practices that we use in I-O psychology that are appropriate to some populations and not to others.

Components of the competency for diversity and inclusion

Part A

The first statement of this competency, that reviewers should "have up-to-date familiarity with key constructs, theories, and findings regarding diverse populations," is the foundational step for this competency. Just as I-O psychologists should have familiarity with key constructs, theories, and findings in subfields like motivation, performance appraisal, safety climate, and personality, so should I-O psychologists have familiarity with D&I. One of the challenges of a field that has both strong scientific and strong application approaches is the need to have both breadth (i.e., knowledge across areas) and depth (i.e., expertise within specific areas). Some example concepts include invisible versus visible identities (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Sabat et al., 2017) and disclosure

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(Capell, Tzafrir, & Dolan, 2016; Follmer, Sabat, & Siuta, 2020). Intersectionality theory increasingly challenges our assumption that identities and their interactions are predictable. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are used; there are myriad well-documented approaches to analyzing qualitative data rigorously.

The focal article mentioned that it is critical for reviewers to be experts regarding the research topic, method, and methodology (Köhler et al., 2020). Reviewers need to be familiar not only with the literature on a topic but should also be knowledgeable about how diverse populations are impacted within their specific research domain or how they have been overlooked (e.g., job satisfaction of gig economy workers, the role of sexual orientation in selection decisions). Because reviewers serve to ensure that published research is relevant and rigorous (Köhler et al., 2020), they should also challenge researchers to be more rigorous when considering the role of D&I in their work. Reviewers could push for researchers to include samples that are more representative of the population and consider identity dimensions beyond age, gender, race/ethnicity (e.g., SES, education level, parental status); incorporate intersectional identities into analyses (e.g., experiences of Latinx women vs. Latinx men and White women); consider application of theoretical perspectives overlooked because they have been developed using non-WEIRD samples; consider theoretical perspectives from other disciplines (e.g., organizational sociology) that may have some utility to I-O psychology; and challenge assumptions of generalizability given nonrepresentative samples.

Part B

The second component of the competency states that reviewers need to "understand that studying the experiences of individuals from non-WEIRD populations may lead to findings that seem counterintuitive or unexpected in the face of the established literature." Historically, psychological research in general has drawn heavily upon populations in WEIRD societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), and research in I-O psychology follows the same pattern. In a review of 100 years of diversity research in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Colella, Hebl, and King (2017) demonstrated a notable lack of research examining the workplace experiences of individuals who lived outside of the U.S., were racial minority individuals (beyond the experiences of Black workers), practiced religions other than Christianity, belonged to the LGBT community, came from a low socioeconomic background, or had disabilities. Bergman and Jean (2016) demonstrated that the I-O psychology literature overrepresents salaried workers and underrepresents wage workers. I-O psychology research also disproportionately emphasizes the U.S. workforce, as over 50% of the samples found in I-O research consisted of U.S. participants, despite the U.S. workforce representing less than 5% of the global workforce (Myers, 2016).

There are many well-established findings about certain job-related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment) that were discovered and validated using samples that were mostly drawn from majority members (i.e., White, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, U.S. citizens or U.S.-located, etc.) working at white collar jobs. It is possible that when I-O researchers draw on the experiences of other populations (e.g., women, racial minorities, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, LGBT individuals, blue collar workers, etc.), the resulting findings may contradict the established I-O literature. These counterintuitive findings should not be dismissed out of hand, but rather should be critically examined by reviewers. It is possible that these unexpected findings are legitimate effects that had been overlooked by past researchers due to the populations that were historically examined (or not). It is also likely that there will be some topics that are important to particular populations that are not important to the populations that are typically included in our samples (e.g., insecure food and housing for minimum wage workers, which are less likely to be relevant to white collar workers); that a topic is relevant to only some segments of the labor market is not a limitation but rather an important recognition of the myriad ways that work matters in people's lives.

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Part C

Next, we explain that reviewers must be able to "recognize that sampling, methods, statistical analyses, and study implementation should be affected by the population of interest and the D&I issues therein." Reviewers and authors need to think critically about issues related to D&I when it comes to research design and study implementation. It is important that researchers make a concerted effort to have representative samples in their research instead of merely excusing a nonrepresentative sample in the limitations section. Additionally, reviewers need to address issues related to generalizability across groups. Studying only certain job types (e.g., white collar jobs) in certain societies (e.g., WEIRD) is especially problematic if researchers draw broad, sweeping inferences about experiences in the workplace for all humans, even though there is no way to ensure that the findings from a specific sample would generalize to other settings (Henrich et al., 2010).

Further, we must acknowledge that some methodologies are inappropriate for some circumstances. For example, the common practice of academics partnering with practitioners who provide organizational access to conduct a study will not work for studies of the experiences of trans* persons in the workplace. As another example, it is important to recognize that voluntary participation in studies by organizational employees might not be so "voluntary" in different countries. We should also consider some of our common practices, such as translation–back translation (Brislin, 1970), and whether these practices can withstand changes in labor markets and workforces in countries outside the United States.

Part D

The next component is short but critically important: "acknowledge intersectionality." Intersectionality is the idea that individuals have different social identities that can interact, such that there are "interlocking oppressions and privileges across various contexts" (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008, p. 5). The important conclusion to draw here is that demographics do not simply add up or multiply. Instead, intersectional identities can result in surprisingly different outcomes in different contexts. As an example, it is clear that Black men make more money per hour than Black women, but both make less than White women, who make less than White men. Yet when considering police shootings, it is clear that Black men are at significantly greater risk than Black women, White women, and White men (Bergman, 2018). This "reversal of (mis)fortunes" for Black men and Black women cannot be accounted for in simple additive or multiplicative models of intersections of demographic characteristics. They can only be explained when the intersections of identities and sociocultural histories are considered.

Part E

Reviewers should "acknowledge that all people are affected by unconscious biases and should therefore be constantly vigilant to the impact of these biases on their judgment, and be sensitive to the positionality of the author(s), participants, and themselves (i.e., as reviewers)." Unconscious biases are "automatic associations, of which we may not be aware, that are difficult to control and may conflict with our professed beliefs and values" (Holroyd, Scaife, & Stafford, 2017, p. 1). Unconscious bias could impact reviewers' judgments during the peer review process in several ways. For example, confirmation bias could lead reviewers to seek out, notice, and recall information that is consistent with their expectations, while negative bias could drive reviewers to notice, recall, and process more negative information compared to positive information (King, Avery, Hebl, & Cortina, 2018). Reviewers need to be cognizant of the role these biases may play in their decision-making processes.

Positionality is "the recognition and declaration of one's own position in a piece of academic work" (Jafar, 2018, p. 323). Positionality has mostly been considered within the context of qualitative research. It is accepted that all people—including researchers, participants, and reviewers—have

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multiple overlapping identities that impact how they approach the world (Kezar, 2002). Positionality allows researchers to understand the nuances of the relationships between researchers and participants, acknowledging that the dichotomy of insider/outsider research is an oversimplification of the researcher–participant relationships (Thurairajah, 2019). Positionality is something that should be considered at every stage of the research process: selecting a research topic, making decisions regarding the methodology, determining the most appropriate analyses, and disseminating the findings (Shaw, Howe, Beazer, & Carr, In press). Although positionality is an issue that is familiar to most qualitative researchers, it is not discussed much in quantitative research. There has been some effort to extend positionality to quantitative work, so that readers can better understand the context of the researchers and the participants (Jafar, 2018). Reviewers should encourage researchers to more formally acknowledge their positionality in their specific research projects and address the implications of their positionality. Additionally, reviewers should also be aware of how their own positionality impacts their review of the research at hand.

Fostering the diversity and inclusion competency

The primary components of fostering the D&I competency are formalized training, information gathering, and introspection.

Training

The most obvious way to foster this D&I competency is through formalized training. In line with King et al. (2018), we agree that reviewers should receive "training in demonstrating equitable, fair, and constructive review-process procedures" (p. 851). SIOP could offer workshops to teach members about the importance of diversity and inclusion during the review process. Specifically, the focal article suggests that practitioners should be encouraged to be reviewers of academic publishing to bridge the science–practitioner divide (Köhler et al., 2019). By offering workshops and providing continuing education opportunities for practitioners, SIOP can support practitioners in becoming better reviewers of research literature, which can help bridge the science–practitioner gap.

Information gathering

However, formalized training is not enough, in large part because of the ever-changing landscape of D&I issues. In addition to familiarizing themselves with core concepts, methods, theories, and findings relevant to both the D&I subfield and D&I issues in the subfield of interest, reviewers should utilize the resources offered by SIOP (e.g., attending diversity themed symposia, reading *TIP* and *IOP* articles) and APA (e.g., online guide clarifying common gender identity terminology; APA, n.d.). Reviewers should keep up-to-date with popular media regarding social and political issues in order to place this research within the current climate; to build high competency, reviewers should read popular media created by and for minoritized group members to understand how groups that are often overlooked in our research perceive societal events. Reviewers should be proactive and independent in the self-education process and not solely reliant on others (particularly members of the minoritized groups of interest, who typically bear the cognitive and emotional labor of serving as the minority representative) to provide the necessary information.

Introspection

Finally, reviewers should engage in introspection in order to understand their positionality and biases. A large component of this is considering how their various identities (race, gender, class, SES, education), experiences, and belief systems inform their approaches to research and assumptions about what the workplace is like. Some questions that might make good candidates to begin the introspection process are as follows: What kinds of workplaces have I and my close family members spent

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time in as a worker? What are the features of these workplaces? How does my financial status (e.g., income, wealth) offer me or limit my choices about work? How might my choices be different if my financial status were different? How has my educational status impacted my choices regarding work?

Conclusion

We would like to reiterate that SIOP's committee did outstanding work proposing the reviewer competency framework. We applaud their efforts. We are happy to offer this friendly amendment to the proposed framework with the ultimate goal of a science and practice that better addresses and ultimately improves the experiences of all workers.

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