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CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIVERSITY: AN EXPLICATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING IN ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

Accountability is fundamental to proper social functioning, promotes transparency, and directs individuals' actions. This research compares and contrasts major conceptualizations in contemporary scholarship. It presents an overview of accountability, which can be integrated into training regimens in the workplace, and describes what accountability provides regarding individuals' attitudes and work-related behaviors. In addition, this work evaluates research in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Specifically, we analyze how training and accountability promote these attributes. Ultimately, this research contributes to organizational training literature by bridging the gaps between accountability and diversity-related issues.

JEL: M10, M12, M14

KEYWORDS: Accountability, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, DEIB, Training

INTRODUCTION

This work intends to assess the current state of research on accountability and discuss its applicability to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). This review incorporates accountability research that goes back several decades and folds it in with recent scholarship (e.g., Tetlock, 1985; Royle, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). This work intends to identify gaps in DEIB literature related to accountability but stops short of claiming that theories of accountability and the reality of job training cannot address new and evolving societally demands for greater equality. As such, we will explain what accountability and responsibility are and how they differ as well as overlap. We will then discuss issues and dimensions of diversity and how we, societally, answer (or do not) for ourselves and each other. At that juncture, we will discuss different training protocols, how they work, and their potential applicability to enhancing DEIB in our workplaces. Accountability is fundamental for the proper functioning of societies and organizations. Without it, we would find life chaotic and lacking the appropriate directives to promote societal and organizational goals (Ferris, et al., 1995). Furthermore, prior scholarship suggested that organizations would fail to operate effectively without it (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Frink & Klimoski, 1998). At the national level, accountability lapses hurt both individuals, in terms of what they can expect by way of reductions in entitlement services, and the macroeconomy as a whole. In fact, such undesirable behaviors doomed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, swelled deficits, and put the United States in relatively less favorable credit terms (Altman & Hass, 2010). Furthermore, unaccountable individuals might engage in criminal activity. According to a 2022 publication from Dow Jones, global financial crimes could total nearly $2 trillion annually. It noted that the abuse of financial systems undermined financial institutions' functioning and reputations. Financial crime lessened countries' attractiveness for foreign investment, increased

fluxions in currency rates, and contorted otherwise normal distributions of wealth and resources. Additionally, in the United States, the consultancy McKinsey & Company (2019) concluded that firms with greater numbers of ethnically diverse employees performed 35% better than their peers whose diversity numbers were only in line with national averages. Furthermore, firms with greater gender diversity augmented company performance by 15% vis-à-vis their competitors with lower levels of participation by women (Hasham et al., 2019). At present, the state of accountability research is well-developed. However, its application to diversity is still evolving. A review of what it means to be responsible would be helpful to better understand accountability. Only by understanding individual responsibility would employees be able to grasp the more abstract notions of accountability. Organizational members need to know their responsibilities and feel accountable for the subsequent behavioral outcomes. One such outcome is the fostering of an inclusive organizational environment. If engendering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is important to a firm, it should enshrine those objectives in training regimens that promote responsibility and accountability. Absent individual accountability for ourselves and others, it is difficult to imagine being able to enhance a firm's attractiveness to an increasingly diverse workforce that values inclusion and equity. If individuals do not answer for either their behaviors or those of others, they are likely to engage in a game of escalating, unproductive blaming when goals related to DEIB are not met (O'Connor et al., 2011). Accountability is a key concept in social justice literature, because it refers to how individuals and groups answer for their actions (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Diversity, equity, and inclusion are also essential elements of social justice. Belonging relates to the importance of the feeling in a community or group (Wright, 2015). We contend that these concepts are interconnected because accountability cannot easily be achieved without diversity, equity, and inclusion. Similarly, inclusion cannot be achieved without a sense of belonging. Therefore, the primary purpose of this research is to bridge the theoretical gap between accountability and DEIB. Most importantly, this article explores how accountability, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are interconnected and how they can be used together to create effective training regimens.

In order to arrive at our recommendations, we started by looking at the literature on DEIB and identifying barriers in organizations. We found that non-inclusionary organizations have both formal, structural dimensions as well as interpersonal/experiential aspects (Bailey et al., 2017). We noted that accountability too has objective organizational aspects (e.g., Sclenker et al., 1991) and informal, experiential facets that apply to how individuals answer both for themselves and others (e.g., Tetlock, 1992; Royle et al., 2009). As such, we propose that by focusing employees, particularly those with policy-making authority, on inequitable policies in their organizations and addressing dismissive interpersonal behaviors, we can frame them both as cases of lacking proper answerability. In order to bolster answerability, we thus suggest training to change employees' behaviors and, ultimately, affect change in the structure of their firms (e.g., by changing rules, eliminating barriers to employee success, and attracting more/better diverse members).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to make our case that accountability models and training regimens can augment diversity in organizations, we will first flesh out the differences between accountability and responsibility. We will then discuss the differing dimensions of accountability. We will then introduce an overview of DEIB and discuss what types of training are likely to promote accountability for diverse individuals in firms.

The Interface between Responsibility and Accountability

In common conversation, the terms responsibility and accountability are synonymous. Nevertheless, in terms of contemporary scholarship, they are distinct yet complimentary concepts. The opening portion of this research examines these distinctions and discusses how acting responsibly enables individual accountability and, subsequently, how it allows employees to be accountable for others. Responsibility is a pre-condition of accountability which requires that individuals meet explained expectations and

obligations (Schlenker, 1986; Schlenker & Weigold, 1989; Schlenker, et al, 1991). According to these scholars, responsibility models are formal and mostly objective (as opposed to phenomenological as discussed below). These scholars (e.g., Schlenker, 1986, Schlenker & Weigold, 1989; Schlenker et al., 1991) posited that responsibility is comprised of "evaluative reckonings." These judgments are rooted in information related to three interrelated concepts. First, understood *prescriptions* guide individuals' behaviors in different circumstances. Second, there are commonly accepted *events* related to those prescriptions. Lastly, individuals possess *identity images* that relate to those prescriptions and events and that are relevant to their aspirations, qualities, roles, and convictions.

To better understand how these reckonings relate, consider the societal definition of parenthood (or legal guardianship). Parents, due to their identities, are subject to socially prescribed ways to treat their children properly. When they veer from these prescriptions, they risk being socially or, perhaps, legally sanctioned by others (Schlenker et al., 1991). However, they might be lauded for being exceptional parents if they adhere well to those prescriptions. Contextually, evaluations require individuals to consider information about the perceived events themselves, the prescriptions related to the characteristics, and the identities of the individuals involved (Schlenker et al., 1991). Although ostensibly objective, this process is also perceptual and subjective, so tacit miscalculations about responsibility are common. Schlenker et al. (1991) claimed that the combined effects of the three elements determine the degree to which individuals are judged to be responsible. Individuals are deemed responsible if the following conditions are met. First, coherent sets of prescriptions apply to a given event (prescription–event link). Second, others believe the prescriptions apply to specified individuals because of their identities (prescription–identity link). Lastly, individuals are implicated in an event, particularly because others believe they possess some control over the situation and fathom the foreseeable outcomes of their behaviors (identity–event link). These three interrelated elements prompted Schlenker and colleagues (1991) to dub it the "triangle model of responsibility." These authors considered a responsibility to be the adhesive that binds individuals to events, assigns relevant prescriptions, and, thus, influences behaviors. As such, responsibility fundamentally lays the foundations of our collective judgments of others and of potential sanctions (Schlenker et al., 1991). Although responsibility is the basis of assigning judgments, it is the condition of accountability that brings the full power of sanctioning and reward to bear.

Accountability for Oneself and Others

If, in the triangle model of responsibility described above by Schlenker et al. (1991), an adjudicator is added to the triangle, it becomes a pyramid. In that case, that person "looks down" on the evaluated audience, thus creating another dimension to the linkages and configurations. The addition of a "judge" (i.e., an evaluating audience) to the triangle model changes the dynamic from a two-dimensional triangle to a three-dimensional construct (Schlenker, 1986). The inclusion of an individual who can reward or punish makes responsibility become accountability. Although the pyramid model of accountability is prevalent in the literature, it is not the only noteworthy contemporary theory in accountability scholarship. The phenomenological view of accountability (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999) also provides important insights into its dimensionality. The scholars contended that accountability involves individuals' implicit and explicit expectations that individuals might have to defend, explain, or justify their beliefs, decisions, and treatment of others. Concomitantly, researchers contend that accountability describes individuals' levels of guilt when they violate established protocols and/or engage in inappropriate activities (Cummings & Anton, 1990). Individuals who cannot justify their behaviors (whether or not those are unethical, illegal, or prohibited) are deemed accountable. Individuals who cannot provide adequate explanations to the outside evaluating audience should expect sanctions ranging, potentially, from social alienation, job loss, or fines and imprisonment in more extreme circumstances (Stenning, 1995). Conversely, those who can justify their actions could experience positive outcomes (or at least mitigate sanctions).

The phenomenological view of accountability takes its roots in the social contingency model (Tetlock, 1985, 1992). Theoretically, this view contains several unique components. Scholars contend that there are four quintessential conditions that relate to individuals and their accountability. The first is simply being observed by others (Zajonc, 1965; Zajonc & Sales, 1966). They demonstrated that individuals behave differently when they believe they are being observed. Identifiability is the second element. When employees grasp that their utterances and actions reflect on them personally, they are likely to be more circumspect when deciding what to do or say (Zimbardo, 1970). The third component of the model relates to what norms individuals perceive in a given situation that either reward or punish them. When individuals believe that identifiable rules, either explicit or implicit, could implicate them, they tend to comply with those expectations (Geen, 1991). The last theoretical element is reason-giving. If called upon to do so, most individuals are willing to give the rationale and justification for their actions (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000). Contemporary scholars posit that accountability is mostly a good thing. In amalgam, accountability focuses members of the organization on their tasks and augments the level of their efforts (Zellars, et al., 2010). Although this is generally accepted, some finite circumstances contradict that conclusion. For example, Zellars et al. (2010) assumed that employees perceive, interpret, and adhere equally to directives, especially those related to accountability.

However, organizational directives are predicated on the assumption that individual differences will not affect members' reactions to conditions of accountability. Essentially, some might believe that what is good for them is also good for everybody else and that differing personalities, for example, are not important. That assumption does not always hold true. Some individuals, if held accountable, find it straining, whereas others find it mostly innocuous (Hochwarter et al., 2005). Those who find accountability anxiety-provoking typically engage in behaviors and coping strategies that reduce their levels of discomfort (Zellars et al., 2010). The social contingency model noted that personal and environmental constraints interact with accountability conditions to predict differential coping choices based on different social pressures (Tetlock et al., 1989). For better or worse, individuals' reactions to accountability differ when they believe they know the views of their evaluators. If they think they know what evaluators want, they will most likely comport their views/actions on those assumptions (Tetlock, 1983; Tetlock et al., 1989). Generally, the authors believe that coping by compliance is fine to the extent that falling in line with the standards and behaviors of evaluators (e.g., superiors) does not contribute to a lack of transparency, unethical behaviors, or illegal practices. In addition to phenomenological and structural views, accountability has both formal and informal dimensions that have deep historical roots going back as far as Roethlisberger's and Dixon's (1939) Hawthorne studies. They found that informal norms influence employee behaviors related to motivation and job performance. Ferris et al. (1995) found that tacit and explicit behavioral rules/norms drive organizational members' conduct. Frink and Klimoski (1998) claimed that the logical extension of that discourse should include accountability. Recent findings indicated that accountability manifests in informal and formal contexts (Frink & Klimoski, 1998; Hall et al., 2017). That stated, their scholarship applied to the dimension that makes individuals answerable to their superiors for their own behaviors or attitudes. Accountability, however, also has a dimension wherein people answer for others.

At present, relatively less scholarship focuses on understanding the consequences (e.g., attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes) of individuals' perceptions of accountability for others. The concept of accountability for others (AFO) includes individuals' beliefs that they are, to varying extents, "on the hook" for others' behaviors and attitudes when they conduct their own jobs (Zellars et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2003; Royle et al., 2008). Furthermore, accountability for others also has an informal dimension (e.g., Royle et al., 2008). Informal accountability for others (IAFO) is an observable set of behaviors (e.g., speaking up for colleagues) that indicates individuals' willingness to answer for the behaviors and attitudes of their peers without regard to rank, tenure, or formal mandate (Royle, et al., 2008; Royle et al., 2009; Royle & Fox, 2011; Royle & Hall, 2012). This view is closely related to the work of Morrison and Phelps (1999). Their research found that individuals are usually motivated to enhance their own organizational well-being, as well as that of others, by proposing beneficial change (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). As such, both directly

or indirectly, these actions affect other relevant constituencies. Part of the IAFO construct relates to the phenomenological view discussed previously (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). In fact, employees usually believe they answer for their peers' intentions and behaviors (Zimbardo, 1970; Ferris et al., 1995). Accordingly, the observers can leverage reward and sanction power. That said, informal accountability augments individuals' work-related outcomes. Those who signal it understand that they act as proponents for others and intend to take organizationally and personally beneficial actions (Royle & Hall, 2012; Royle & Fox, 2011). That research indicated that answering for others and appropriately shepherding them had many beneficial outcomes (e.g., career augmentation, mobility, and the bolstering of individuals' organizational reputations). Royle, Fox, and Gonzalez (2016) demonstrated that in organizations with traditional career structures (i.e., where workflow is predictable and job descriptions are stable), being informally accountable for others enhanced desirable outcomes for employees. Scholars also suggested that IAFO bolstered both career engagement and inter- and intra-organizational mobility (Greenhaus et al., 2010; Royle et al., 2016). Importantly, employees with higher levels of IAFO were more prolific internal (i.e., within their organizations) career builders. IAFO led to more enhanced opportunities for promotion, training, and assignment to desired jobs. At the same time, IAFO enhanced individuals' career mobility because they were equipped with more experience and thus became more attractive candidates in the labor market (Royle et al., 2016; Greenhaus et al., 2010).

Royle et al. (2009) and Mossholder et al. (1981a, 1982b) reached similar conclusions. Royle and colleagues' work indicated that self-esteem (i.e., individuals' beliefs that they deserve respect and affection) enhances performance in organizational contexts. Mossholder et al. (1982) demonstrated that employees with low self-esteem sought peer and group interaction more than those with high self-esteem. A fundamental aspect of peer interaction is IAFO because it signals individuals' willingness to answer for others. People's choices are based on their beliefs that their capabilities/skills are sufficient to affect positive change and, in their prognostications, that others will appropriately respond. Employees consider the probability that their suggestions will give peers with lower-level organization-based self-esteem (e.g., Pierce et al., 1989) the impetus to carefully attend to and properly act upon their suggestions for improvement. As such, informally answering for others is both prescient and a gamble. Such findings confirm Mossholder et al.'s (1982) premise that those with high self-esteem are more proactive problem solvers. Thus, signaling IAFO is a proactive behavior because it promotes compliance and predictability by aligning the behaviors of those for whom the accountable party informally answers with organizational expectations and norms of performance.

Although being accountable for others is an individual act, it is not entirely individualistic. Circumstances in the organization can precipitate it. Royle (2013) found that the degree to which individuals are embedded in their organizations predicts their decisions to answer for others. Embeddedness involves the degree to which employees believe they fit (e.g., are compatible in terms of the utilization of their skills, values, and ethics) within the organization, the degree to which they are linked (e.g., centrally situated in the organization's social network and hierarchy), and the extent to which their jobs provide their desired "life-space" conditions (e.g., their appreciation of local amenities, weather, local schools, etc.) (Mitchell et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2004). Royle (2013) found that "life-space" did not predict IAFO. That may be because it exists outside the organization itself and is driven by personal choices for free-time activities that would not often involve coworkers. However, the other facets of embeddedness (i.e., links and fit) prompted employees to answer informally for others more often (Royle, 2013). The findings suggested that if employees feel they belong in their organizations due to a common belief in the mission statement, a shared sense of ethicality, and compatibility between job requirements and their skill sets, they exhibit higher levels of IAFO. Additionally, those with more linkages to others (e.g., have many committee assignments or are central to organizational communication) informally answer for others more often than those who are relatively distant at work. Avoiding risk and reducing uncertainty are fundamental drivers of IAFO and could be brought to bear on a dominant group's view of DEI. Naturally, the future is, to varying degrees, both uncontrollable and unforeseeable. Nevertheless, future uncertainty is deeply problematic for many

people. Pacini and Epstein (1999) described uncertainty avoidance as individuals' general preferences for situations, wherein information is precise enough to gauge future events, while understanding unforeseen circumstances is inevitable. Other findings (e.g., Pacini & Epstein, 1999; Hofstede, 1980) indicated that individuals generally seek to hedge the downside risks of uncertainty. Essentially, employees act as rational actors who attempt to obfuscate uncertainty in order to cope with their fears of unattractive future outcomes. At the individual and aggregate levels, national cultures and individuals differ in uncertainty avoidance (Pacini & Epstein, 1999; Hofstede,1980; 2001). Pacini and Epstein (1999) noted that uncertainty aversion differs from risk. Risk implies individuals have fairly well-developed notions of the probability of future events (e.g., a 70% chance of being rained on). Royle et al.'s (2016) findings indicated that employees know that their career trajectories are non-linear and that jobs are often unpredictable in the wider labor market (Capelli & Neumark, 2001). Furthermore, their research indicated that employees believed IAFO helped reduce risk. If fact, employees believed IAFO helped reduce the risk of being terminated but simultaneously augmented the ability to change jobs if they chose to do so.

When individuals answer for others, it is something they do of their own volition, but it has emotional consequences (Royle et al., 2008). When employees engage in behaviors that signal IAFO (e.g., acting as a liaison between peers and supervisors or championing a disaffected coworker), others in the organization take note (Royle et al., 2008). In fact, being noticed is crucial to understanding why employees choose to signal IAFO. They understand that answering for others does not occur in a vacuum. The public nature of demonstrating IAFO hints at another fundamental theoretical driver: the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960; Meyer & Allen, 1997). This theory contends that when people do favors for others, they expect something in return at a later time. When employees believe a coworker signals IAFO (e.g., they informally mentor them or promote their work-related interests) they believe that because a peer did a favor for them, they should reciprocate. They can do so by aligning their behaviors and attitudes with those of the peer who signaled IAFO (Royle et al., 2008). Additionally, when individuals believe others have provided a benefit to them, they try harder to meet others’ expectations related to organizational goals and take steps to address substandard performances. For those who signal IAFO, it enhances their reputations within the organization and bolsters their promotion chances (Royle et al., 2008).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The most common understanding of diversity relates to the state of being "different" (Byrd, 2014). This description was first applied to those who were mentally disabled, deformed, overweight, or deemed morally deficient. All those groups were socially stigmatized for being "different," but the list has expanded over the decades. It includes others of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, and sexual preferences/identities (Byrd, 2014; Crocker & Major, 1989). The recent focus on diversity in the United States has its roots in the civil rights era circa 1950-1964 (Ciszek, 2019). U.S. Supreme Court rulings like those that banned school segregation (i.e., *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) and interracial marriage (i.e., *Loving v. Virginia*, 1967), laid the groundwork for eliminating "Jim Crow" racial segregation. Case law led to further federal legislation, which included passing the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 (Title VII) and the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (Title IX), enshrining equal access under the law. Subsequently, organizations and intuitions of higher learning developed programs to allow an equitable opportunity for individuals to go to college and for diversification of its workforce, including affirmative action in admissions and hiring, the expansion of women's intercollegiate athletics, and nondiscrimination policies. These legal requirements expanded over the next five decades as differing groups (e.g., the disabled, those in the LGBTQ community, veterans, and racial/ethnic minorities) fell under that umbrella. Thus, diversity and the associated notion of multiculturalism became codified. As such, different organizations sought to incorporate diversity into mission statements. These entities are as varied as corporations, for-profit firms, universities, and academic libraries (Ciszek, 2019).

Individuals who promote diversity may face some push-back, because some others might believe their group is inherently superior to others. As such, for them inclusion is not a priority. Indeed, some contemporary organizations prosper by embracing the notion that employees outside the dominant group deserve marginalization, exploitation, and disenfranchisement and, thus, treat at-risk individuals dismissively (Hardiman et al., 2007). Nevertheless, Cruz (2019) claimed that our contemporary, politically-charged environment, wherein bystanders routinely upload instances of racially- or homophobically-motivated aggression to the Internet, has made awareness of and sensitivity to diversity issues critical. Cruz (2019), however, lamented that with the rise of hate groups, authoritarianism, and "fake news," the overall political climate often negates recent steps organizations have made to enhance DEIB.

Another impediment to inclusionary practices relates to institutional inertia. When firm members try to address problems in organizational life (e.g., a lack of awareness or DEIB protections), the opposition can be muted avoidance but is sometimes starkly bigoted (Kohlburn & Gomillion, 2019). For example, Case, Kanenber, Stephen, and Tittsworth (2012), researched a campaign by members of a university community to amend its nondiscrimination policy. Faculty, staff, and students sought to incorporate gender expression into the code. Their research noted constraints such as long debates over minutiae in the phrasing of the policy, instances of false claims, religious proclamations, and 'zero-sum' thinking (i.e., meaning that by expanding diversity the majority group loses some of its power and prestige (Case et al., 2012). Ultimately, that effort was successful, but Case et al.'s (2012) research provided a cautionary tale for those trying to advance LGBTQ issues in their communities. LGBTQ individuals, especially those who identify as gender-nonconforming and transsexual, encounter not only interpersonal challenges related to access and parity but also subtler institutional obstacles which can trigger gender dysphoria as well as anxiety and depression (Ems, 2010). We note that the LGBTQ community, in particular, feels depressed, marginalized, and often suicidal (Seelman, 2014). Furthermore, they are at heightened risk of sexual and domestic violence (Seelman, 2014). This is particularly true for transsexual women of color, who are about four times more likely to experience sexual abuse (Forestiere, 2020).

In fact, they face discrimination on several identity metrics (e.g., being transsexual, African-American, and female). Gonzales and Henning-Smith (2017) used the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to create a large cohort of 300,256 individuals, 8,920 of whom identified as LBGTQ. They found differences in mental health and identity problems between lesbian/gay/bisexual and straight respondents. Bisexual respondents were more than twice as likely to report psychological difficulties related to alcoholism and depression vis- à -vis both straight and gay/lesbian respondents (Gonzales & Henning-Smith, 2017). Their findings further indicated that bisexual individuals felt tangibly higher levels of psychological distress than either lesbian or gay respondents. Although bisexual individuals were less likely to disclose their preferences to coworkers, those who did experienced considerable discriminatory backlash (Sawyer et al., 2018). Uniformly prior scholarship predicted the negative health consequences for such at-risk communities (Gonzales & Henning-Smith, 2017). To adequately address such disparities, Scott (2014) suggested using a “critical theory” lens to promote cultural and organizational change and address these problems. The first step is to educate members of organizations and the public about important aspects of racism and other inequitable treatment. The second is to address the recurrent nature of these issues. The third is to identify and develop strategies to address and fix the underlying structures of racism in order to adjust our cultural dialogue. If organizations wish to promote social justice by implementing beneficial diversity programs, their human resource managers take all of these steps. Concomitantly, Scott (2014) contended that diversity education is necessary to promote social justice. Furthermore, to actually experience felt change, it is necessary to look at the benefits of diversity training. HR managers should be involved in the change process and understand how current training methods either do, or do not, promote accountability for individuals and others as well as the consequences for DEIB.

Belonging: The Fourth Dimension

One way to overcome these challenges is to create a culture of belonging within the organization. This can be done by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among all members for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. In doing so, organizational leadership may need to provide adequate resources and training on these topics and create opportunities for dialogue and discussion. Holding all members accountable for their actions and words is essential to create a culture of belonging. When done effectively, creating a belonging culture can help promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization (Adejumo, 2021). This can ultimately lead to a more positive work environment and a more productive workforce. Belonging is an important concept that can be found in everyday life (Bennett, 2013; Guo & Dalli, 2016). The literature on belonging is, to say the least, diverse (Wright, 2015). The concept is also mobilized in many ways (Mee & Wright, 2009). Many theorists (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Fenster, 2005) elaborated on different aspects of belonging. For example, Antonsich (2010) suggested belonging may range from a 'personal, intimate, private sentiment of place attachment' (place-belongingness) to a 'discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion' (politics of belonging). Yuval-Davis (2011) followed a similar schema, distinguishing belonging, which relates to emotional attachment, and feelings of being ''at home." It is rooted in a politics of belonging bound up with the construction of particular collectivities with specific boundaries. Fenster (2005) differentiated between a personal place attachment, a sense of belonging, everyday practices of belonging, and more public-oriented formal structures such as citizenship. Baubock (2005) and Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2017) further posited that there is a distinction between the more personal/affective/ intimate dimensions and the structured/public/ political aspects of belonging.

That said, the notions of belonging encompass multiple scales, sites, practices, and domains, from the affective to the structural. Indeed, how belonging plays out at multiple scales is an important point (Morley, 2001). Scholars of belonging have discussed belonging from the scale of the home (Walsh, 2006) to a national homeland (Ho, 2009; Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000) and a global community or transnational network (Bromley, 2000; Beck, 2003). As an emotion, belonging is implicated in the production and reproduction of the 'ordinary,' including ordinary racism and day-to-day experiences of exclusion (Ho, 2009). Organizational studies argued that firms constrain their members and make employees feel isolated and insecure (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Paranque & Willmott, 2014; Parker et al., 2014). The emphasis on economic interests makes it difficult for employees to gain a sense of social acceptance or validation or to build relations with others (Collinson, 2003; Paranque & Willmott, 2014; Parker et al., 2014). That said, firms' attempts to mobilize employees' sense of belonging through mission statements have been criticized, often because leadership failed to address the exclusionary character of their organizations (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003). We contend that training regimens could augment the beliefs that employees foster, and those could augment the sense of belonging contained in mission statements that often ring hollow. Research in belonging encompasses the skills and sensibilities by which people actively orientate themselves toward and connect with the concerns of others, thereby gaining a sense of social acceptance or validation. Latour's (2013) work highlighted the need to develop this idea and to explore the active construction of belonging as an organizational practice. Yet, developing them in organizations implies practical work (Latour, 2016). Therefore, this research provides insights into integrating accountability, DEIB in the context of organizational training.

DEIB Explained and Accountability in Training

Most organizations have some form of accountability structure in place, whether it is a formalized process or simply an informal understanding among members. However, accountability structures are not always effective in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belongings within the organization. This may be due to several factors (e.g., a lack of understanding of the importance of these concepts, a lack of commitment to implementing them, or a lack of resources). In other words, despite the rich literature on

the subject, the current practice of accountability and DEIB in training is lacking. Organizations often fail at their attempts to deliver on strategic diversity plans (El-Amin, 2022). In this respect, the roles of human resource managers and training interventions are crucial when bridging the gap between what is and what could (or should) be. Almost every employee could claim to be diverse on some level, although they likely have unique biases that they might not readily admit (Tetteh, 2021). When individuals with various surface-level diversity traits (e.g., ethnic, age, sexual orientation, or religious backgrounds) interact in the workplace, they often feel uncomfortable with the differences they perceive in others. Typically, this is because they are put off by non-conformity in others and/or feel threatened by change (Tetteh, 2021). When this happens, it becomes apparent that diversity within the organization is not well-managed. The problematic consequences of poor diversity management in firms include productivity losses, declining revenue, higher rates of turnover, increased absenteeism, miscommunication, interpersonal conflict, and difficulties recruiting new employees (Allen, 2006; Arai et al., 2001). Fundamentally, diversity training helps employees better understand, anticipate, and adapt to the inevitability of change (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). That, of course, relates directly to changes in organizational diversity. There is wide variation between organizations with respect to diversity training methods and goals (Tetteh, 2021). According to Ragins et al. (2012), in order to bolster training effectiveness, the goal of diversity training must link with organizational effectiveness and embrace all groups, even those most historically privileged (e.g., white males). Diversity training programs should be thoughtfully considered, with their rollouts timed to avoid as many negative reactions as possible (Tetteh, 2021). Generally, in order to avoid withdrawal or backlash, organizations should not immediately make participation mandatory and should avoid forcing individuals into diversity training programs arbitrarily (Ragins, et al., 2012). Ragins et al. (2012) further asserted that executives and line managers should, in public view, attend the training sessions and emulate the prescribed behaviors. Additionally, every member within the organization should be taught to identify and avoid discriminatory behaviors and advised of the disciplinary consequences for failure to comply (Tetteh, 2021; Ragins et al., 2012).

Diversity training can be both formal and informal (Tetteh, 2021). Gowan (2022) noted that several overlapping concepts should be covered. Training programs are generally comprised of one or a number of the following concepts: skill building, cultural awareness, an overview of diversity, sexual harassment, and other forms of aggression in the workplace, and group interventions/therapies for teams experiencing excessive conflict (Berzkova et al., 2016; Lindsey et al., 2017). Sarkar (2021) indicated that effective diversity training only occurs when it is targeted to both awareness and skill development, incorporates larger diversity initiatives, allows/requires trainees to set diversity-related goals, and requires that trainees engage in perspective-taking activities. Sarkar (2021) also found that when people met in small groups to discuss the nature, prevalence, and detrimental effects of stereotypes, they were less likely to act on those negative preconceptions. As such, all employees should simultaneously be advised by their HR managers about state and federal laws related to discrimination (Sarkar, 2021).

According to a study published in *Harvard Business Review* (Carr et al., 2019), companies might experience substantial bottom-line benefits if employees feel like they belong. That research indicated substantial increases in job performance (56%), reductions in the risk of turnover (50%), and fewer claimed sick days (down 75%). In firms as large as 10,000 employees, companies could accrue cost savings of about $52M annually. Although these findings are attractive, they are not guaranteed or automatic. In order to include belonging in the training process, managers may need to leverage emotional intelligence (i.e., the ability to empathize, control emotions, express those emotions properly, and manage interpersonal relationships) (El-Amin, 2022). Furthermore, Robbins and Judge (2018) proposed that organizations utilize the three-step model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Lewin, 1947) to enhance organizational change in order to facilitate the training process. This model presents an appropriate, unpretentious, and applicable standard for understanding the DEIB or an organizational change process. The three-stage process model involves the unfreezing stage that shows employees that change is necessary. The change stage involves moving toward the preferred level of behavior by helping them learn a new conceptual framework. This might also

require the beneficial development of a role-model program complete with mentors, specialists, benchmarking outcomes, and coaching. The refreezing stage involves solidifying new behavior as the standard. Changes are reinforced and stabilized (Robbins & Judge, 2018). In fact, organizational changes must endure until the inevitable need for revision occurs (Hayes, 2014).

Essentially, training and development can leverage human and structural diversity, optimizing knowledge management and improving organizational outcomes (e.g., Raggins et al., 2012; El-Amin, 2022). Advocating for diversity education and initiatives with individuals who do not see the merit of DEIB training is critical. One strategy to introduce diversity to individuals who have only experienced a limited number of cultures is to schedule regular training consisting of in-person, practical scenario-based, computer-based training. Another strategy is to diversify programs, courses, and learning objectives to maximize the value of DEIB training. That said, we propose proactive approaches that make DEIB relevant and valued. HR managers, with the espoused support of top leadership, are likely best placed to change organizations' cultures as well as to promote diversity (Clement, 1994; Tetteh, 2021). In order to resolve conflicts and enhance cross-cultural communication, HR managers need to carefully implement, assess, and improve diversity programs and affect company policy to enhance organizational performance (Phillips & Gully, 2019; Olian & Rynes, 1986). They should also identify individuals in firms that can champion the cause of diversity and promote beneficial change and innovation (Lockwood, 2005; Hewlett et al., 2013). We, thus, propose that those individuals who signal IAFO are the ones HR should seek to involve. Furthermore, because HR managers frequently network with other professionals in the field, they can augment their own firms' performances by learning what works best for others (Manning & Decker, 2021). Diversity initiatives are daunting for some leaders because they require them to place employees who may resist into diverse groups (Tetteh, 2021).

When this happens, conflict often arises. Nevertheless, both managers and subordinates need to understand that conflict is a necessary part of the process and, when navigated appropriately, creates better outcomes (Caleb, 2014). Clearly, HR managers should be good conflict negotiators. However, negotiation skills alone are not sufficient. In order to address issues related to DEI and belonging, they also need to model proper behavior, gather useful feedback, and effectively communicate interpersonally (McCarter et al., 2020). Current research suggests that HR professionals should routinely interact with executives and top management team members to reinforce the strategic importance of diversity (Tetteh, 2021). For a diverse organization to succeed, leaders must be accountable for the outcomes of their initiatives (Tetteh, 2021). Commitment to diversity must be championed and demonstrated by top-level executives (Martinez-Ferrere et al., 2021). Clear responsibilities and roles for executives should be codified, and diverse employees should be assigned to teams charged with the diversity management. Further, researchers indicated that senior managers should be involved in diversity council themselves (Tetteh, 2021; Martinez-Ferrero et al., 2021). Like Tetteh (2021), we underscore the need for executives to answer for the progress of their DEIB initiatives individually. Belonging is a key component of inclusion. If employees actually feel included, they usually believe that their employers care about them as individuals (Wiles & Turner, 2022). Although firms have made progress with respect to DEIB, not all employees feel entirely vested in and valued by their organizations. This complicates authentic interpersonal interactions with coworkers when they deem it necessary to suppress their true feelings or hide aspects of their identities (Gartner, 2022). In order to avoid that and to enhance a culture of belonging, Gartner (2022) proposed emphasizing diversity in succession planning and holding events (e.g., Women's History Month) that acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of underrepresented groups within the organization. Additionally, providing employees with benefits that honor their unique contributions is directly linked to whether or not employees feel like they belong. It is crucial for organizations to LUV (listen and understand views) from employees (Jungle, 2022). When employees know their views are important and can influence and shape the organization, it helps create a sense of belonging. HR departments along with their training would, thus, augment belonging.

RESULTS

The primary goal of this research is to integrate the literature on accountability, DEIB, and training. Researchers and practitioners alike would be well-served to ask the following questions related to accountability and DEIB. Leaders, HR professionals, and employees would do well to address the following questions: When do organizations look at the linkages identified in the pyramid model of accountability (e.g., Schlenker et al., 1991)? Could they identify those failing and needing attention? What mechanisms (i.e., those that are transparent, objective, and equitable) and parties exist to evaluate employees' behaviors, and what are the associated rewards or punishments? Can the organization facilitate training that helps approximate and integrate the felt experiences of minority employees? What aspects of an environment also augment employees' willingness to answer for others? Are employees placed in diverse work groups regularly? Based on Schenker's and colleagues' work (e.g., 1989, 1991), we contend that in the absence of personal responsibility, accountability for oneself or others is impossible. As such, investigating the links in responsibility is essential for training purposes. As noted earlier, individuals judge responsibility based on prescriptions, events, and identity images relevant to participants (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989; Schlenker et al., 1991). With respect to prescriptions, a clear understanding of the firm's goals, as well as the legal responsibilities of its managers and employees, is an essential training element (Skaggs et al., 2020). Absent clear prescriptions for behavior, it is unlikely that employees will behave uniformly in their job obligations.

With respect to events, cultural sensitivity training should focus on a collaborative, uniform interpretation of social occurrences, and small group training and cultural simulations would be helpful to allow all employees to judge events in a similar way (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). If employees do not conform to the training protocols, they will likely revert to the cultural biases and stereotypes that taint the relationships they could have with diverse coworkers. This undermines organizational DEIB efforts. With respect to identity images, it is crucial to address the two levels of diversity: surface vs. deep (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Heretofore, most of this discussion has centered on surface-level traits (e.g., the Title VII Civil Rights classifications). Indeed, that is important. However, for organizations to thrive, they should also embrace deep levels of diversity (Greenhaus et al., 2010). That said, it could be difficult for companies to achieve because the training involves interpersonal interaction with dissimilar coworkers (Paul et al., 2022). Diversity training should focus on promoting what values individuals have in common (e.g., the value of their work, how best to provide for their families, or hoping for a better future). In fact, research indicated that when individuals can relate to their coworkers in such a fashion, they experience more profitable and synergistic outcomes (Smith & Smith, 2008). Simply having an organizational oversight mechanism is insufficient to ensure accountability. The phenomenological view applies in this circumstance. If formal oversight cannot overcome inherent political pressures, what can? We believe that a better understanding of the lived experiences of others might provide insights. Tetlock (1983, 1985) wrote about the phenomenological view. The philosophical branch of phenomenology describes how humans develop self-awareness and consciousness (Costello, 2012; Heidegger, 1972). These authors noted that phenomenology also indicates a direction. It does not relate just to what we believe is real, but also, to what is possible (Heidegger, 1972). Scholars working in DEIB and its impact on HRM might find this heartening. In fact, many of the training methods noted in this article encourage individuals to empathize with others deemed different in order to build a possibly more inclusive future.

Extending the notion of appropriate HR training to IAFO, this research suggests that the previously described methods will likely increase the likelihood that employees will informally answer/support each other. For example, provided diversity training is not a one-off, individuals are likely to get to know each other well because of the frequent interpersonal interactions. As such, employees are likely to view others as predictable, trustworthy, and, perhaps, friendly (Royle, et al., 2009; Royle, 2013). In fact, prior research demonstrated that informal answerability is contingent on reciprocity, trust, and the likelihood that others will change their behaviors (Royle et al., 2008). As such, these training protocols could help employees

better understand their peers' job-performance difficulties and may promote fidelity (Royle et al., 2016). Thus, this research posits that based on such training protocols employees would be more willing to speak up on behalf of their coworkers and exhibit higher levels of informal accountability for others.

CONCLUSION

This paper evaluates the present status of accountability research and discusses its relevance to diversity, equality, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). It combines past studies on responsibility with more recent findings (e.g., Tetlock, 1985; Royle, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). That being said, the primary purpose of the research is to bridge the theoretical gap between accountability and DEIB. Most significantly, this study investigates how responsibility, diversity, equality, inclusion, and belonging are interrelated and how they may be used in conjunction to develop successful training regimens. Primarily, we observed that accountability involves both objective organizational features (e.g., Sclenker et al., 1991) and informal experience dimensions that pertain to how individuals respond to both themselves and others (e.g., Tetlock, 1992; Royle et al., 2009). This study uncovered the importance of DEIB and accountability in training. Most importantly, it is vital to foster a sense of belonging inside the organization. Lastly, this research extends the concept of adequate HR training and implies that the previously outlined approaches will likely boost the possibility of workers supporting each other informally.

Therefore, practitioners or HR professionals may need to give enough resources and training on these themes (e.g., DEIB, accountability) and establish chances for discourse and discussion. It is critical to hold all members accountable for their actions and comments in order to foster a sense of belonging. Further, creating a culture of belonging may foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within a business when done correctly (Adejumo, 2021). Nevertheless, there might be a limit to which diversity training will impact employees and promote organizational well-being. One crucial obstacle to promoting DEIB is the incalcitrant belief that others are different and, thus, not equal (Kedia & Mukherji, 1999). Communication becomes, thus, more complex. As such, organizational leadership may be better able to foster DEIB by providing their members with regular communication opportunities.The nature of this research is theoretical. Therefore, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support our assertions. In addition, the researchers assume that people connect with one another in order to assist socialization and awareness of accountability, and that these connections require interpersonal contact that is mostly face-to-face in nature. We also did not consider variables such as trustworthiness, corporate culture, demographics, or leadership styles. Going forward, empirical research that includes both qualitative and quantitative data might give evidence to validate our conclusions. A future study might also investigate an implicit yet crucial aspect of responsibility. Researchers may also consider variables such as trust, organizational culture, and leadership to access the process and results of training. Moreover, it is essential to assess if remote/distance working enhances or detracts from the study's findings. Remote employment might provide difficulties for firms trying to enhance accountability via training. Changes in work-life conditions, such as access to digital connection and housing settings may pose risks to the well-being and mental health of a substantial number of workers (e.g., Bertoni et al., 2021). Therefore, scholars may wish to study if the alienation resulting from remote employment affects attempts to promote diversity and accountability.

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