
Back to basics: How the Belmont Report can Inform DEI Policies

Written By: Dr. Kimberly Morse

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has become of great interest over the last several years. Interest and focus on DEI initiatives seemingly skyrocketed after May 2020. While the increase in focus is positive, often, there is uncertainty with what to do, or companies continue to rely on outdated methods to measure their DEI practices in the workplace.

Unfortunately, many companies use their demographic data to indicate how well they are doing with DEI initiatives. They further rely on the practice of following EEOC guidelines in terms of staffing to support their DEI initiatives. When these are the cornerstone of the DEI practices, the organization is largely focusing on the Diversity component, and has not yet begun to explore the other components.

The danger with only focusing on the diversity component is that women and BIPOC may fall victim to tokenism. This occurs often when a single individual is asked to speak on behaviors and attitudes of the entire population of a given demographic, and they are expected to be the authority on the given demographic. Tokenism becomes more problematic, as it causes people to feel devalued as the victim can be made to feel as though he or she is being paraded around or is showcased as a symbol of the organization's attempt at diversity and inclusion. It is ingenuine and most people recognize it.

It would further be wise for organizations to be extremely mindful about their DEI departments and if the person being selected to head the department will also be given the appropriate tools and support to be successful. There are cases where an organization created a DEI team, fully staffed with women and BIPOC, and then failed to support the team or provide guidance and financial resources to properly enact true DEI initiatives. In these cases, the DEI team is a token. The organization does little more than parade around a diverse team of people to showcase that it seems to care about DEI.

Too many articles and people say just to be more inclusive, and that will solve the problems. But they fail to say how to be more inclusive. Organizations can work with dedicated DEI Consultants who work to build sustainable practices within the organization to provide a truly inclusive culture. DEI Consultants often have significant research background, as well as practical experience to help organizations conduct the necessary assessments and analyze the data to really see what's going on. The consultant can then work with the organization to help them implement the necessary changes to be able to develop and sustain a culture of inclusivity.

A great place to start comes from the ethical principles found within the Belmont Report. These principles include Beneficence, Respect for Others, and Justice. While the Belmont Report is largely used for research with people, the ethical principles are tantamount to the basic level of human decency that people should expect from their organization.



Benevolence

Benevolence pertains to the principle that all persons are treated in an ethical manner by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm while also making appropriate efforts to ensure their overall wellbeing. Therefore, organizational policies and practices should go beyond the bare minimum. They should look to do no harm to the person, both physically and mentally, while also maximizing potential benefits and minimize potential harm. This means that organizations should be looking to develop policies and practices that provide the necessary supports for their employees so that the people within the organization are able to perform their tasks successfully. If there is unavoidable potential for harm, the organization should provide ample resources to provide relief should people experience harm. This pertains to physical and mental harm. Look at your organization's policies and procedures and ask what they are actively doing to help prevent harm, and how do they work to ensure that people who are harmed have resources available.

**UNDERSTANDING
BENEVOLENCE:
ARE WE DOING NO
HARM?**

**52% OF WOMEN REPORT
WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**



Fekedulegn, Alterman, Charles, et. al, 2019

470,000+

**DISCRIMINATION
CALLS TO EEOC IN
2020**

EEOC, 2021

\$439.2 million

**Secured for victims of
workplace
discrimination in 2020**

EEOC, 2021

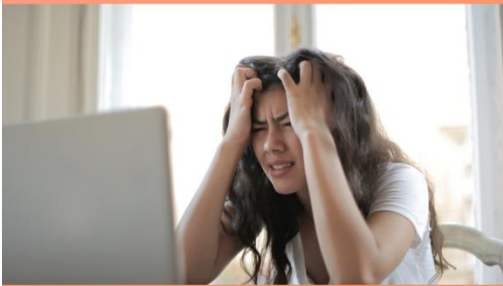
**We must do
better.**



**THE COST OF
MICROMANAGERS**

69%	71%	85%
Consider changing jobs due to micromanagers	Reported micromanaging interfered with performance	Reported that morale was negatively affected by micromanagers

Barnes, 2015



\$600,000

Annual cost of micromanagers on a typical 10,000-person organization in disengagement

Tredgold, 2018

Respect for persons

Respect for persons encompasses two ethical considerations: 1) that people should be treated as autonomous beings, and 2) that persons with diminished autonomy should be entitled to protection. This sounds simplistic, but it is actually a construct that can be the most challenging to accomplish. A person with autonomy is able to deliberate about goals and can decide on a course of action based on that goal. Their opinions and choices should be given weight and others should refrain from obstructing their pursuits, unless it would potentially cause harm to another person. However, often individuals in the workplace are denied their basic respect as an autonomous person when their opinions and voices are rejected or immediately denied, they are unable to act on their decisions (within reason), or when pertinent information is withheld from these individuals without valid reasoning. Many times, people are treated as unable to be autonomous by micromanagers who engage in behaviors that are perceived as controlling and degrading.

Further, respect for persons plays a role in how persons with disabilities are treated in the workforce. There may be cases where a person is partially or completely unable to act autonomously, when that happens, they need protection and assistance. However, just because a person may need an accommodation or some assistance to be successful, does not mean that they are wholly unqualified or incapable of performing their work. Accommodations should be re-evaluated periodically to ensure that the person's needs are being met appropriately through their accommodations.

Ensuring that people are treated equitably based on their needs and their abilities is a cornerstone of any DEI initiative.

Interestingly, respect for persons can be quite difficult to measure, if organizations are unaware of how it manifests within the culture. However, once recognized, a culture of respect for persons promotes inclusion and improves organizational commitment and other pro-organizational behaviors.

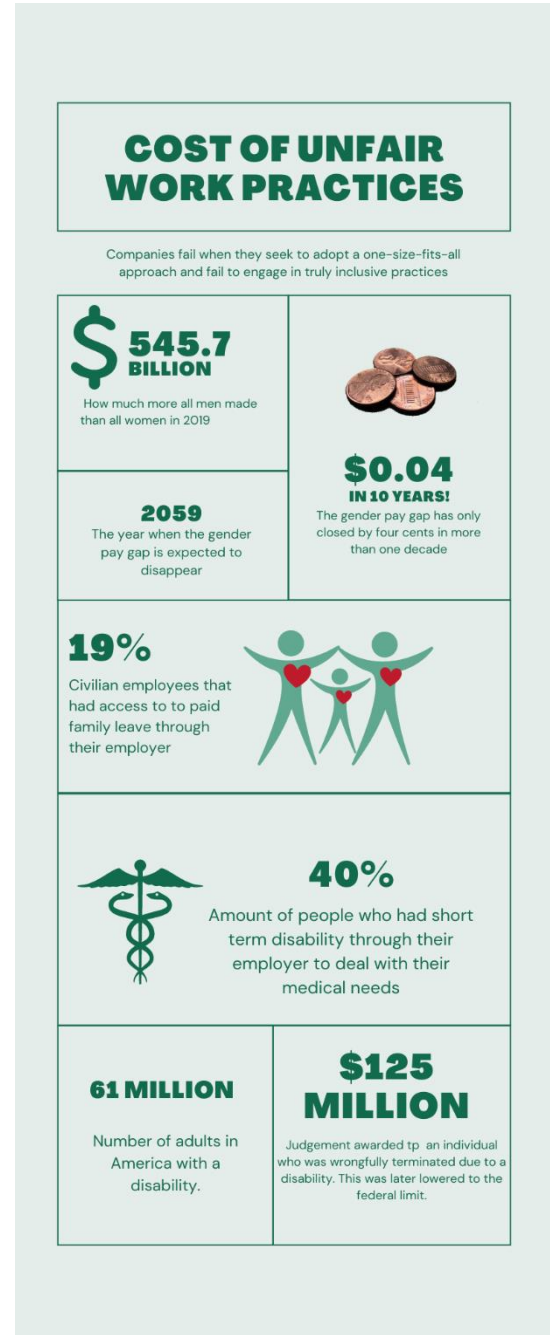


Justice

Justice pertains to the fairness in distribution or ensuring all members in the organization are receiving benefits that are justly deserved. An injustice occurs when a benefit is denied without good reason or when a burden is unduly imposed on an individual. Often, the idea of treating everyone equally is expressed in a way to ensure that justice is occurring; however, that is an erroneous mindset. This is because people are different, they have different needs, skills, abilities, and other attributes. Further, there are real-world constraints that would inhibit this practice. For example, not everyone can have a corner office or a window seat. Not everyone can use the stairs or are able to easily use a pull/push door. Therefore, true justice occurs when people are provided the resources and the benefits based on a number of factors. This can include individual need, individual effort, individual merit, their contributions, and to ensure that all have the same opportunity to be seen, heard, and to be successful.

Salary is one of the most contentious aspects of justice in the workplace. While paying people different salaries based on protected classes, such as gender and race, is technically illegal, [it continues to occur](#). This continues to hold true when women and BIPOC have similar roles with similar educational backgrounds and experience. Additionally, many persons with disabilities are limited to the types of roles they assume, largely based on discriminatory language in the job posting. Therefore, persons with disabilities are less likely to apply to jobs where phrases like “ability to lift ‘x’ pounds”, “stand on feet for 8 hours”, or other “requirements” are listed. Despite the fact that many of the pertinent tasks could be accomplished with accommodations. Therefore, there is little justice for persons with disabilities in the process of even looking for employment.

Unfortunately, many organizations have a one-size-fits-all approach to benefits; and many more maintain only what the law requires. For example, a recent New Jersey law requires employers to give a minimum of five paid sick days per year for full-time employees. There are many employers in



New Jersey that offer only that, nothing more. Prior to that law, there were companies that stipulated employees were only permitted one sick day per quarter. This resulted in people coming to work quite sick and placing others at risk of harm, being temporarily unable to sufficiently complete their daily tasks, and meant that they did not receive the resources they needed (e.g., adequate paid time off) to stay home and get better. Which results in greater numbers of people getting sick, coming to work sick, and job performance decreasing throughout the duration of the illness.

The practice of engaging in policies that draw from the ethical considerations found within the Belmont Report will be a great first step at achieving truly equitable and inclusive workplace cultures. When organizations focus on engaging in the practices of beneficence, respect for others, and true justice within the workplace, they will see the increase in ratings of inclusivity. Additionally, according to existing research, organizations will likely see [significant financial gains](#) from engaging in practices that promote equitable and inclusive practices. Ultimately, it is the organizations that take the steps to become truly equitable and inclusive that will lead the next generation to success.

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