

Editorial

New at Cell Press: The Inclusion and Diversity Statement

Recent events around the world have confronted many of us, in science and beyond, with the stark realities of systemic inequality. At Cell Press, they prompted us to look inside ourselves and ask what more we can do to fight prejudice and promote social justice. The challenges are large, and although we have made a start through articles we have published and authors we have highlighted, we see room to do more.

We know how important justice and equality are to the communities we serve. In an ideal world, science would cover and be conducted by as broad a range of individuals as exist in global society, with everyone who wants to participate being and feeling welcomed as part of the overall scientific community. Currently, however, the scientific enterprise is a long way from such inclusion and diversity. We want to find ways to push for positive change through the platform of our journals. As part of that, we see an opportunity to give authors a forum to share information about themselves and about the efforts they are making. With that in mind, we will soon launch a new initiative across the majority of the primary research journals at Cell Press designed to give authors a mechanism to share with us information related to inclusion and diversity that is relevant for their paper. In tandem, they will also have the option to highlight this information to readers of the paper itself by adding a dedicated statement, which we have termed the Inclusion and Diversity statement.

The concept underlying this initiative is similar to existing statements about Declarations of Interest, Author Contributions, and Data and Code Availability but focusing on highlighting aspects of the paper that are relevant for inclusion and diversity. It is purposely multifunctional and designed to give authors a venue to share ways in which their work or their research group, or both, are contributing to help science become more inclusive and diverse overall. For example, authors can include information about efforts to ensure diversity in cell lines or genomic datasets used for a study, efforts to ensure sex/gender balance in research subjects, efforts to ensure that any study questionnaires are prepared in an inclusive way, self-identification of authors as members minority groups, support that any authors have received from programs designed to advance minority scientists, and efforts made to promote gender balance in citation lists. We also included an opportunity to highlight efforts to avoid the concept of “helicopter science,” in which authors, generally from a high-income country or non-indigenous group, rely on people and resources from a lower-income or indigenous group but then analyze and publish the data without appropriate involvement or recognition.

To simplify the process of reporting information, we have prepared a [dedicated form](#) for authors to use, with a series of discrete and standardized options to indicate via simple check boxes. We will ask a/the corresponding author for each paper to complete and provide this form on behalf of all authors on

the paper at the point of acceptance. Our expectation is that the corresponding author will share the form with all co-authors when also sharing the final version of the paper with them for review and ask at that time if they would like to provide information by checking the relevant answer. We will not ask or expect authors to provide this form with initial submissions or revisions. Importantly, the presence or contents of this form will not have any impact on scientific consideration of articles. As always, during the review process we will continue to focus on the scientific content alone and without any consideration of the characteristics of the authors involved. We also continue to expect authors to cite the references that are scientifically relevant for their work, and then we encourage them to layer considerations about gender balance on top of that.

Author teams who prefer not to participate in this initiative will have the option to indicate this choice when completing the Inclusion and Diversity form. We appreciate that there are limitations and even risks associated with asking one author to complete this form on behalf of all others, particularly because of the potential for discomfort about revealing personal information to colleagues or supervisors. We want to emphasize that any authors who feel uncomfortable about sharing information should not in any way feel pressurized to do so. We do also see some advantages of this approach in terms of the consistency with other forms that we ask authors to complete and the relative degree of anonymity achieved by having this information be gathered at a team rather than an individual level.

We will keep the information that we gather in these forms private and secure and will only use it for aggregated reporting. We will also not share it with any external parties. We hope to be able to use it to report at a general level about the types of inclusion and diversity efforts that Cell Press authors are making. As the *New York Times* [recently pointed out](#), we need to have data to help us monitor progress. For example, we would like to be able to report how many of the studies we publish actively worked on diversity in the selection of experimental materials or samples. We are also well aware of how important role models are for encouraging people of diverse backgrounds to pursue science, and hope that if we can report on, for instance, how many of our papers include at least one minority scientist among the author group that could help to encourage more minority young people to pursue science as a career.

At a more specific level, we will also give authors the opportunity to use the information from the form as the basis of an Inclusion and Diversity statement that will appear in the published paper. The statement will consist of standardized sentences that correspond to the checked items on the form itself, to ensure consistency and avoid the need to spend time on composing or editing. Inclusion of a statement in the published paper is entirely optional, but we want to encourage

all authors who publish with us to consider doing so as a way of acknowledging both their own efforts to support positive change and the importance of addressing these issues within the context of science more broadly. We will include reporting about how many author groups choose to add a statement to their paper as part of our overall analysis of the success of this program. In essence, therefore, we will require all author groups to provide a completed form with the final version of their paper, but they will have a choice about whether to participate in the initiative by providing information and about whether to include a statement in the published paper.

Our thinking about this initiative was informed by a number of different factors and contributions. Internally, we have had frequent discussions about the types of actions we can take and are looking for ways in which we can make a difference. We have consulted with a number of researchers who are active in issues related to inclusion and diversity to help inform our approach and very much appreciate their input and advice. Initiatives such as the [SAGER \(Sex and Gender Equity in Research\) guidelines](#) have emphasized the importance of sex and gender reporting in research, reflecting the relevance of inclusion and diversity across disciplines. Other organizations have put forward analyses and plans that provide inspiration, including the [Royal Society of Chemistry](#). We were also recently contacted by Daniela Roessler, who wrote to us and other publishers to propose that we ask submitting authors to sign a declaration about inclusion and diversity during submission, and two of our journals, *Neuron* and *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, published pieces by Danielle Bassett, Perry Zum, and colleagues suggesting that authors consider including a Citation Diversity Statement. We incorporated all of these inputs and ideas into the approach we have taken, and we are grateful for the all of the feedback and suggestions we received.

We hope that this new inclusion and diversity initiative will give our authors a powerful opportunity to share their contribu-

tions in a visible way within the context of their article. We see it as a way to acknowledge current authors who have worked to improve inclusion and diversity in science and encourage others to do more going forward. We also hope it will be a source of inspiration and confidence within the scientific community and beyond. We will run this program as a pilot during the course of 2021 and make a decision about whether to continue, adapt, or build on it toward the end of the year. For this first iteration we have chosen to focus on research articles only. If it is successful it could be extended more broadly, including to review material and to becoming a required item for all articles, in the future.

We welcome any comments and suggestions you have about this initiative and how to develop it going forward to help achieve the intended goals of promoting, fostering, and highlighting positive change in science.

“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”—Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933–2020), U.S. Supreme Court Justice and equal rights pioneer, May 29, 2015

We can all be part of the solution.

Web Resources

“Scientific Journals Commit to Diversity but Lack the Data,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/30/science/diversity-science-journals.html>

“Sex and Gender Equity in Research,” <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29451543/>

Royal Chemistry Society, “A framework for action in scientific publishing,” <https://www.rsc.org/new-perspectives/talent/framework-for-action/>

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