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**RESEARCH GROUP ON LEGAL DIVERSITY PUBLISHES BROADEST STUDY OF
DIVERSITY IN PROFESSIONAL CAREERS TO DATE**

CHICAGO, Aug. 18, 2016 — In a new book published by [Cambridge University Press](http://CambridgeUniversityPress.com), four [American Bar Foundation](http://AmericanBarFoundation.org) (ABF) scholars reveal the reality of diversity practices in contemporary law firms, corporations, and law schools. [*Diversity in Practice: Race Gender, and Class in Legal and Professional Careers*](#) examines the disconnect between expressed commitments to diversity and the practical goals that are achieved, revealing the often obscure systemic causes that drive persistent professional inequalities.

The book is co-edited by [Spencer Headworth](#), an affiliated scholar at the ABF and assistant professor of sociology at [Purdue University](#); [Robert L. Nelson](#), director emeritus and the MacCrate Research Chair in the Legal Profession at the ABF, and professor of sociology and law at [Northwestern University](#); [Ronit Dinovitzer](#), Faculty Fellow at the ABF and professor of sociology at the [University of Toronto](#); and [David Wilkins](#), the Lester Kissel Professor of Law at [Harvard Law School](#). *Diversity in Practice* is part of [Cambridge Studies of Law and Society](#), a series of the best scholarly work on legal discourse and practice in social and institutional contexts.

Diversity in Practice is the broadest study of diversity in professional careers to date. Expressions of support for diversity are nearly ubiquitous among contemporary law firms and corporations. These commitments are typically backed by a dedicated diversity staff and various diversity and inclusion initiatives. Yet, members of historically underrepresented groups remain seriously disadvantaged in professional training and work environments that white, upper-class men continue to dominate. These patterns are particularly pronounced in the legal profession. The contributors in *Diversity in Practice* use a wide range of data and methods to build on existing literature and offer new paths in explaining enduring patterns of stratification in professional careers. The realistic assessments in the book provide opportunities for practitioners to move beyond mere rhetoric to something approaching diversity in practice.

Nelson, Dinovitzer, and Wilkins co-direct the ABF's [Research Group on Legal Diversity](#) (RGLD) and are centrally involved in "[After the JD](#)," the ABF's national longitudinal study of legal careers. The RGLD was established in 2011 to examine trends in diversity and inequality in the legal profession and institutions of justice. The group brings together leading researchers and practitioners working on diversity issues. A critical first step toward the goals of the RGLD was the establishment of a [Research Chair in Diversity and Law](#) at the ABF. In December 2012, the [Fellows of the ABF](#) led a successful \$1.5 million fundraising campaign to endow the [William H.](#)

[Neukom Fellows Research Chair in Diversity and Law](#), which was fully funded after a major gift from [William H. Neukom](#), founder and CEO of the [World Justice Project](#).

The RGLD recently held its [2016 conference](#), organized around the theme of “[Metrics, Diversity, and Law](#),” on May 5-6, 2016, in Chicago. Presentations focused on the key role of metrics in law and other professions, in the decision-making processes of gatekeepers at critical junctures throughout careers, and in drawing conclusions about successes and failures in efforts to advance diversity and inclusion. The [conference](#) brought together [producers, consumers and scholars](#) of metrics to facilitate the dissemination of research and stimulate new lines of inquiry. Presenters included [Rima Alaily, Microsoft Corporation](#); Lee Webster, [University of Texas Medical Branch](#); [Robert Morse, U.S. News & World Report](#); [Aracely Muñoz Petrich, Minority Corporate Counsel Association](#); [Hilary Sommerlad, University of Leeds School of Law](#); [Brian Levine, Mercer](#); and [Richard Tonowski, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#). The conference was co-sponsored by [Northwestern University](#), Microsoft Corporation, [Allstate Insurance Company](#), and [Kirkland & Ellis LLP](#).

The first three conferences of the RGLD, held in [2012](#), [2013](#), and [2014](#), presented original research on diversity and inequality in the legal profession, legal institutions, and other scientific and professional fields. The takeaways from these conferences informed parts of *Diversity in Practice*, and produced new collaborations between researchers and practitioners to advance diversity and equality.

“Despite dramatic changes taking place in the world of professional services, and the growing presence of women and people of color in law and other professions, we see remarkably little progress for traditionally disadvantaged groups in the professions,” said Professor Nelson. “*Diversity in Practice* helps to explain why. It thereby points to how meaningful change may be accomplished.”

Diversity in Practice is available for purchase on [Amazon](#) and the [Cambridge University Press website](#).

About the Editors

Spencer Headworth is an assistant professor of sociology at Purdue University. At the American Bar Foundation, he is an Affiliated Scholar and a former Graduate Research Coordinator and Project Manager of the Research Group on Legal Diversity. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from Northwestern University in June 2016, and will begin as Assistant Professor of Sociology at Purdue University in August 2016. He studies crime, social control, law, inequality, organizations, and professions. His dissertation, “Policing Welfare: Investigation and Punishment in Public Assistance,” examines dedicated welfare fraud control units, a novel intersection between the worlds of public benefits and law enforcement.

Robert L. Nelson is a sociologist of law who studies law, inequality, and the legal profession. His books include *Legalizing Gender Inequality: Courts, Markets, and Unequal Pay for Women in America* (with William Bridges) which won the best book award from the American Sociological Association, and *Urban Lawyers* (with John Heinz, Edward Laumann, and Rebecca Sandefur). Nelson is the MacCrate Research Chair in the Legal Profession at the American Bar

Foundation and professor of sociology and law at Northwestern University. He is co-director of the Research Group on Legal Diversity, and is a principal investigator in the After the JD Study of Lawyer Careers. Nelson was the Director of the ABF from 2004 to 2015, before returning to fulltime research and teaching.

Ronit Dinovitzer is a Faculty Fellow at the American Bar Foundation and Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto, where she is cross appointed to the Institute for Management and Innovation. As a sociologist of the professions, she conducts research on the legal profession, including the social organization of lawyers, the context of labor markets, and the role of diversity in professional careers. She has pursued this work through her involvement with the After the JD project and the Law and Beyond Study.

David B. Wilkins is a world-renowned scholar on the legal profession. He has written more than eighty articles and is the coauthor of one of the leading casebooks in the field, and has given more than forty-five endowed academic lectures around the world. His recent professional accomplishments include Aptissimi Scholar of the Year (ESADE Law School 2014), Honorary Doctorate in Law (Stockholm University 2012), Distinguished Visiting Mentor Award (Australis National University 2012), Genest Fellowship (Osgood Hall Law School 2012), and he Scholar of the Year Award (American Bar Foundation 2010). Professor Wilkins is Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Corresponding Member of the Spanish Royal Academy of Doctors.

About the American Bar Foundation

The [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) is the nation's leading research institute for the empirical study of law. An independent, nonprofit organization for more than 60 years, the ABF's mission is to serve the legal profession, the public, and the academy through empirical research, publications, and programs that advance justice and the understanding of law and its impact on society. The ABF's primary funding is provided by the [American Bar Endowment](#) and [The Fellows of The American Bar Foundation](#).

About the Research Group on Legal Diversity

The [Research Group on Legal Diversity](#) is a network of scholars convened by the [American Bar Foundation](#) to conduct empirical research on diversity in the legal profession and institutions of justice, as well as the impact of diversity on legal processes and legal institutions. It is co-directed by [Robert Nelson](#), [Ronit Dinovitzer](#), and [David Wilkins](#).

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