Leadership in Turbulent Times

Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in the Higher Education Workplace

EDITORS:

Gaëtane Jean-Marie
Henry Tran

Studies in Educational Administration

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Gaëtane Jean-Marie
Ann E. Lopez

Leadership in Turbulent Times

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Leadership in turbulent times uses empirical research, conceptual scholarship, and personal narratives to tell the complex stories of the ways individuals and institutions are cultivating diversity and inclusion in the higher education workplace. The authors examine the individual strategies and institutional actions that address the systemic challenges to integrating diversity and inclusion in higher education. The volume is a must-read for students, faculty, institutional leaders, and higher education policymakers to understand how we can intentionally transform higher education.

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Leadership in Turbulent Times: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in the Higher Education Workplace

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Dr Sean Robinson is the Graduate Director and Professor in the Higher Education and Students Affairs program in the School of Education & Urban Studies at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. His primary teaching and research areas include leadership and teaching for social justice, student identity development, human resource management, and organizational behavior. Dr Robinson has authored over two dozen publications and conducted over 50 presentations both nationally and internationally, many of them centered on LGBTQ issues in education, media literacy, mentoring, and the impact of media/pop culture on LGBTQ youth.

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Sweet is the catalyst for much of the change that Stockton University's EdD in Organizational Leadership program has undergone and continues to experience in recent years. She has a vision of a program that actively partners with all its stakeholders to produce the highest levels of leadership development and change in its students, preparing them to meet volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous challenges and be agile, ready for the changing landscape and nature of our world. Dr Sweet demonstrates leadership, strategic planning, and change management, and considers her very presence to be a gadfly or change agent in nature. She is not daunted by the notion of drastic, deep, and continual change in herself, in others, and in organizations.

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Christina Wright Fields is an Assistant Professor of Education at Marist College. She earned her PhD in Higher Education Administration with a concentration in the academic success of historically marginalized populations from Bowling Green State University. As a diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) activist, educator and researcher, Dr Fields broadly explores the issues of race, gender, and equity in education and administrative practices. Additionally, through use of critical qualitative methodologies, she centers the experiences of Black educators, administrators, and students in both K-12 and postsecondary education. Dr Fields teaches coursework in foundations of education and social and cultural foundations of education.

Prologue

The macro-societal movements and events that have been orchestrated against social injustice in recent years have brought increasing attention to the problems of inequality in our society. Specifically, social movements and events such as *the Black Lives Matter* and *Stop Asian Hate*, the Supreme Court's ruling against the legality of employment discrimination against the LGBTQ population, the exposing of how deeply entrenched in inequity we are as a society from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ever growing diversity of the workforce, serve as impetuses for more diverse and engaging work contexts. Within the field of education, racial diversity issues such as the paucity of educators of color in the field, workload disparity across demographics of the education workforce, the handling of student discipline and employment discrimination have been frequently noted as warranting attention (Brown, 2014; D'amico et al., 2017; Krull & Robicheau, 2020; Metze, 2012) if the goal is to truly create more diverse and inclusive work spaces. We addressed these issues in the K-12 context for volume one of this book series, entitled *Leadership in Turbulent Times: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in the P-12 Education Workplaces.* However, many of the challenges also permeate the higher education environment, which prompted the development of the present book entitled *Leadership in Turbulent Times: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in the Higher Education Workplaces.*

Educational organizations and scholars across the field have embraced the challenge to interrogate these critical issues more broadly. For example, in the recent 2021 AERA Presidential session on workplace inclusion titled, *Creating More Inclusive Education Work Spaces through Talent-Centered Education Leadership*, the second coeditor of this book, Henry Tran, convened a panel of scholars and practitioners that included: Michelle Young, Vincent, Gregory, Wardell Hunter, Bridget T. Kelly, Michele Dow, Mario Suarez, Tiffany Wright, and Douglas Smith, as well as presenters that included Kathleen Cunningham, Simone Gause, Suzie Hardie, and Spencer Platt, as they dialog about how education employers across the P-20 continuum can create more inclusive work spaces, particularly salient given the theme of "Educational Responsibility" for the 2021 AERA conference that year. Please scan the following QR-code for the recording of the session.

In addition, both coeditors of the current book collaborated to provide a space and outlet for promotion of education diversity and inclusion scholarship,

specifically on the intersection of gender and race in the education workplace in two special issues of *the Journal of Education Human Resources* entitled: *Gender and Race in the P-12 and Higher Education Workplace* Volume 40(1) and Volume 40(3). The culmination of the AERA presidential conference and special issues have led to deeper explorations of education workplace diversity and inclusion across a spectrum of related topics ranging from exploring the history of education workplace discrimination experienced by marginalized groups (e.g., people of color, with disabilities, who identify as LGBTQ, gender and intersectionalities of the aforementioned identities), the present challenges they face, to recommendations for P-20 employers concerning how to cultivate an environment of workplace inclusion.

During a time of increasing political polarization and propaganda incited battles waged on social media platforms fueling racial unrest, progress toward social justice can be displaced and concerted efforts in higher education workplace committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion can be hindered. The pursuit of social justice in the education workplace setting invites others to engage and consider diverse perspectives. Yet, the complex intersection of people often depicts social norms that are contradictory to moving toward a just world. In a post-pandemic environment, educational leaders are called upon to respond to the contested terrain of ever-increasing chaotic systems in colleges and universities.

In response to turbulent times in society and education institutions (i.e., social unrest, inequitable access to healthcare, police brutality), employers are challenged to meet the evolving and growing needs of an increasingly diverse society. This edited book provides an in-depth exploration of education workplace diversity and inclusion in response to those needs. The chapters in this edited book draw upon cutting edge theories, evidence-based strategies, and integrate autoethnography and autobiographical of lived experiences. Particular emphasis will be placed on how education leaders can employ inclusive approaches to make positive changes to their work environments that foster a sense of belonging for people of all backgrounds in the higher education setting. The range of chapters examines how leaders in higher education systems developed their own and

others' capacity to accomplish this in turbulent times. The authors invite readers to consider the nuances of personal and professional experiences of leaders in search of meaning while simultaneously leading in organizations that are unpredictable, unstable, and unavoidable chasms of people, systems, processes, etc.

In the introductory semi-autobiographical research chapter entitled *The Algorithmic Arm Race: How Justice Became a Business in Post-Covid Higher Education*, Jennrich chronicles the how one mid-sized regional public university experienced a systematic co-opting of its social justice efforts in a commodified manner and provides discussion on its impact for higher education inclusion. Sweet follows with the second chapter *Leading Transformational Change in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education*, with an in-depth discussion on how to promote sustainable leadership to develop and maintain DEI educational environments. She draws on institutional and leadership transformation theories to provide focus on changing organizations that currently promote exclusive and even outright discriminatory contexts. In the end, this work is necessary to shift the culture and DNA of the workplace in response to the external and internal trends in the environment.

In chapter three *Work–Life Balance for Women in Higher Education*, Jackson reports on a study of six women in executive leadership positions in higher education. They speak on work–life balance in their positions, and how they navigated the leadership roles and responsibilities to their families. They reflect on their decision-making processes and career choices as a result of the balance and perception of women vs. men in the workforce. Relatedly, in chapter four *Women of Color as Outsiders Within the Borders of Academic Leadership*, Gause provides further nuance to the conversation by specifically examining the experiences of Black women in leadership roles.

Taylor parallels the challenges and strategies of recruiting and retaining students from marginalized backgrounds to those same issues for faculty and student affairs administrators in the fifth chapter of this text, *Education Workplace Inclusion Initiatives and Strategies to Cultivate Human Capacity Today*. She argues that the disparate challenges to the lived experiences of students, faculty, and administrators from marginalized backgrounds are currently not addressed, and that higher education institutions replicate inequities they commit to dismantle and blunt the social justice work they publicly commit to. Taylor relies on an autoethnographic approach to examine these issues and make recommendations for improvement.

In chapter six, entitled *The Table at Berkeley: An Ethnodrama Recounting the Experiences of Bisexual Faculty and Staff Navigating the Workplace*, Kakooza and her colleagues show how mononormativity is (re)produced in the workplace based on narratives of six bisexual faculty and staff. The findings are presented through an ethnodrama. In chapter seven, entitled *#BlackWomenAtWork: Lessons Learned From Black Women Educators at Historically White Institutions*, Fields and Howell leverage Black Feminist autoethnography to showcase the hegemonic experiences of Black women at HWIs by sharing their own lived

experiences. They do this to show how the continued disparities endure, and offer insight on how to navigate these treacherous paths as Black women in academia.

Adding another dimension to the discussion, in chapter 8, *What Do I Do Now? Transitions of a Foster Kid: A Personal Narrative*, Ellis examines the topic of foster alumni through her own personal lived experiences as a black woman from foster care currently in the student affairs profession. She examines the nuance and complexity of how identity can manifest in one's professional life, especially as a student affairs professional tasked with supporting individuals who may share the same background.

In chapter 9, *Black Hair and Hair Texture: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion for Black Women in Higher Education*, Rowe argues that higher education perpetuates and reproduces discriminatory experiences that target Black women and Black Hair, and that the latter is often ignored or treated as insignificant when, speaking from her own experience, it carries significant influence for workplace exclusion. Thompson and Coles follow with chapter 10.

Strange Fruit: The Collective Crushing of Black Women in Academe, which draws on Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory to examine the influence of intersectional identities of Black women academics in higher education. The authors provide suggestions on how to address the experiences of multiple marginality promoted by their work context that reflect the same racism and sexism as the broader society in which they operate within. Finally, Tran and Platt conclude the book with chapter 11, *Equity Versus Excellence? How Institutional Definitions of "Talent" Can be Antithetical to Workplace Inclusion in Academia and What Can Be Done*. This chapter specifically interrogates the juxtaposition that is often presumed of equity and excellence, and provides counterarguments to this perspective. The authors not only draw on the literature but also original research to show how performance contributions of those from underrepresented backgrounds can be marginalized, and provide recommendations for a new direction in higher education talent management to cultivate an inclusive work environment.

In sum, this edited book is particularly relevant given the turbulent times in society and institutions of higher education (i.e, social unrest, inequitable access to healthcare, police brutality), where education employers are challenged to meet the evolving and growing needs of an increasingly diverse society. The chapters in the edited book draw upon cutting edge theories and evidence-based strategies by integrating conceptual and empirical work; with particular emphasis placed on how education leaders can employ inclusive approaches to make positive changes to their work environments.

Given the evidence-based benefits of having a more diverse workforce (Lindsay & Hart, 2017), as well as societal expectations from workers to have more diverse colleagues, creating diverse and inclusive work environments have become salient for many education employers and leaders. Readers interested in this topic will find this book to be a valuable resource to explore this topic in-depth. They will also have the opportunity to read about the experiences of different marginalized groups in the education workplace and how to best develop and foster a work environment that engages and includes its workforce. We hope the book sparks

the inspiration that will allow readers to apply what they learn from the book in practice to make real change toward more supportive work contexts for all.

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Chapter 1

The Algorithmic Arm Race: How Justice Became a Business in Post-Covid-19 Higher Education

Jessica Jennrich

Abstract

The racial reckoning of 2020, alongside the collective trauma of the global Covid-19 pandemic, led to a proliferation of DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) offerings within the US higher education system. At the same time, university social justice spaces found a reduction in their staffing, restriction of their work, and an increase of outsourced DEI contributions from non-justice focused locations. This research based, and semi-autobiographical chapter situated Buolamwini's work on coded bias, is grounded in the work of Spivak and Butler, and O'Neil's contributions on mathematical mismanagement. It charts the systematic dismantling of social justice efforts at one mid-sized regional public university as their work was replaced with invalidated and outsourced DEI efforts and gamed with numerical retention requirements, which did little to remedy the genuine inequity built within higher education systems. This chapter offers inferences regarding what those changes mean for inclusion efforts within higher education writ large, particularly with regard to students with marginalized identities (queer, trans, and BIPOC students) who face systemic oppression in the higher education system.

Keywords: Coded bias; DEI in higher education; racial reckoning; social justice in higher education; systemic oppression in higher education; DEI

When Dr Joy Buolamwini set out to create a digital mirror that would generate a positive change in the onlooker as part of her graduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2015, she hit an unforeseen bump in the road. Despite her coding, she was unable to get facial recognition software to recognize her, a

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Black woman, without wearing a white mask (Plostins, 2022). Building on this experience, Buolamwini investigated other artificial intelligence (AI) and found that human bias and human error are coded into algorithms the same way they appear in other systems, leading Buolamwini to add the "coded gaze" to the perspective lexicon of the male gaze, the white gaze, and the post-colonial gaze. Buolamwini describes this phenomenon as "a reflection of the priorities, the preferences, and also sometimes the prejudices of those who have the power to shape technology" Zomorodi (2020). Buolamwini's "coded gaze," when applied in a higher education setting, allows for a new way of thinking about diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI) efforts in regard to motivation and authenticity.

Covid-19, and the racial reckoning of 2020, called for changes to the traditional higher education landscape. With the uncertainty of enrollment in the face of a global pandemic (Rashid & Yadav, 2020) and the dissatisfaction of students in the wake of widely publicized demonstrations of police brutality (Ezell, 2021), pressure mounted upon colleges and universities to reconcile long unaddressed systemic racism and other inequities. As universities fumbled in their response to national incidents, they looked at on-campus equity projects as a way to communicate their intentions in this area but were disinterested in investing in concrete and measurable change, and, as a result, a climate of faux activism arose, "one imbued with institutional complacency and sleights-of-hand. . .that ensured the nation's educational power structures remained undisturbed" (Ezell, 2021, p. 2). Much like Buolamwini's mask, the US higher education system was coding itself as an ally in justice to avoid being seen as maintaining the systems that upholds inequity, but still showed up in results and authenticity as a white figure. Buolamwini had to make herself white in order to be read by the system, much like the diversity, equity and inclusion work that was created in response to these national incidents had to conform to white supremacist systems. While the impetus, and design of the movement may have been rooted in a desire to radically redraw the boundaries of higher education, by the time it was "read" by the machine that is the system of higher education, these modifications were diluted in a way that matches Buolamwini placing a white mask over her Black skin.

This is not necessarily new behavior by the academy; however, historically universities seem to be misunderstood as having functioned as a site of activism and liberation. There is a legacy of higher education as a location for political organization during the US involvement during the Vietnam War and subsequent engagements in Iraq and the Middle East (Torabian & Abalakina, 2012). Additionally, as serving as a setting for the women's rights movement from suffrage to second wave feminism (Marino, 2021). While this is a vast oversimplification of the university's legacy within civil rights, it runs contrary to the dark history of the K-12 educational system that conjures immediate images of the "reeducation" of Native Americans, the upholding of Jim Crow laws and segregation, and the advocation of the gender binary currently restricting trans and non-binary students. This historical misunderstanding within the American imagination creates "vulnerable characterizations of being frivolous and unfounded, evoking a cartoonish avatar associated with extreme sensitivity and an inertia of political correctness" (Ezell, 2021, p. 2). Enter the "woke" American university

administrator, and the "the social justice warrior" into the American consciousness, an image deployed to emphasize a lack of logic, and an unreasonable investment in identity politics (Massanari & Chess, 2018). This collective confusion regarding the higher education backdrop allowed for a diluted, deceptive and, to use Buolamwini's work, a *coded* response to the year 2020's exposure of the reoccurring and horrific racial aggressions that persist in this country.

University Response to 2020 Racial Incidents

As traumatic events unfolded in 2020, universities looked to traditional methods for their campus responses. They churned out ready-made messages in reaction to the tragedies, following past protocol, doing little to discuss what led to these occurrences, nor making meaningful change. These university-wide messages "provide support for the outcomes of a societal crisis; they only seek to acknowledge, not invalidate or extricate, the root causes" (Kruse & Calderone, 2020, p. 3). For example, in a 2020 study by Kiang & Tsai, only slightly more than half (55%) of the 56 major medical schools whose statements they tracked following the murder of George Floyd referenced the act resulting in his death, only 52% made explicit reference to the police, and only 13% used terms like "antiracism" or "Black Lives Matter" (p. 1). Recognizing this was potentially not effective, universities moved on to other modes of diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI) delivery: mass education.

Changing course, typically to keep pace with the demands of students who had begun to find inequities within the university the focal point of conversation, transferring attention from national events, universities began to offer educational opportunities such as panels and conferences. A logical redirect: being that these are institutions of higher learning, the reasoning behind this strategy is one that the intellectuals contained within the ivory tower might imbue the campus with discourse on the peripheral issues related to racism as a way to fortify the community against bias. The bulk of this work falls on Black and Brown folks, and vast administrative jockeying occurs in the "advertising of these events—panels and 'talks' at campus forums, webinars, conferences, and the like—via email listservs and university websites offering academic entities an opportunity to gallantly stake-out a role in the tenor and direction of conversations on racism and to indeed project active involvement in addressing racism" (Ezell, 2021, p. 2). While the choir does indeed need practice, preaching to its members indefinitely, as these performative acts often do, beseeches their attendees to ask more questions rather than put pressure on the administration to make the changes they have been called upon to do. Alex V. Green, Toronto-based activist dubs this as the "The Having Conversations Industrial Complex" and states it "is essential to the workings of liberal political culture. It occupies the nebulous middle-ground between good intentions, institutional inertia, and wholesale repression" allowing those who are part of this complex to profit "professionally, socially, financially, and ideologically" while those doing social justice work and pushing for change

"at the frontline" to be "injured, arrested, and labeled terrorists" (Green, 2020, para 7).

From Social Justice to DEI

The Covid-19 pandemic created a climate of restructuring on many college campuses. While the top-down, corporate style of leadership guiding higher education had been criticized prior to 2020 (Vuori, 2019), the way in which higher education governance coped with the fiscal impact of the pandemic stood out as particularly hierarchical. Eliminating tenure or cutting faculty salaries (Flaherty, 2020), using furloughs for faculty and staff (Whitford, 2020), and surreptitiously reorganizing departments (Goist, 2020), were the focus of higher education news stories. Underneath these headlines were the untold stories of the administrative bait and switch maneuvers colleges and universities were engaging in to limit staffing, or to compound roles already over capacity. For those working with students with "no home to return to, or rather no safe home—with some facing threatening environments and the risk of abuse," for those personally advocating for students of color, those working with students facing food insecurity, those assisting queer and trans students, and those helping students address other forms of trauma, it was both personally dangerous and socially draining (Purcell & Lumbreras, 2021). As colleges and universities engaged in public DEI events lauding their inclusivity, those working with the queer, trans and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities most effected by both the pandemic, and the widespread and consistent racial incidents unfolding in what felt like a continuous cycle, were finding their roles devalued, and needs silenced. It is worth noting that while this chapter examines the impact of the early pandemic and US racial reckoning on queer, trans, and BIPOC students, the impact on students with disabilities cannot be overlooked as the push to return to campus without adequate accommodations and other broad actions by higher education that overlooked this population in general made these students even further marginalized. And, while this population is not the focus of this chapter, it is important to name the ostracization students with disabilities experienced during this, and the time period following to present.

Subjugated Speech

Much like the uneasy history of higher education aligning with past inequities, the lack of authentic marginalized student representation is a complex consideration. Consider Gayatri Spivak's (1988) position in "Can the Subaltern Speak," where in addition to the position that western academic thinking is produced in order to support those same economic interests, she inquires whether an oppressed subject (in her case one from a developing nation) can be studied without permission from the oppressor (or colonizer). For Spivak, knowledge about the developing world was always offered for the purpose of political and economic interest. Spivak further allowed that the subaltern may be silenced by more than

colonialism, but "even from other groupings of the colonized... or the liberal multiculturalist metropolitan academy" (1999, p. 309) allowing for the logical extension of the theory to apply to queer, trans and BIPOC students. This permits one to consider whether the DEI offerings arranged in higher education intended to ever speak for these impacted students at all, and if so, would that even be possible given the economic and social interests of the modern US university? Further, even those panels and conferences that include queer, trans and BIPOC student representation are hindered by strict communication directives highlighting student's alterity for diversity purposes, while limiting student's ability to offer institutional critique or appeal for action or remediation resulting in a sanitization of their voices. Postcolonial scholar Rita Bula asks "but what does it mean to be enabled to speak only for the particular? To have voice only as an expert of an area? This circumscribed institutional voice giving occurs when rigorous attention to the particularities of 'areas' serve discourses of authenticity" (2010, p. 92).

In addition, considering the ability of minoritized students, or the subaltern of this subgroup, to speak, it is useful to consider how one is authorized to speak for oneself. Philosopher Judith Butler (2005) offers reasons that result in a state of distress for the subject when attempting to give an account of oneself; two of those reasons pertain to this population. The first reason is one has a history that creates a partial opacity to the self and second is the subject did not author the norms that provide the mode by which the self narrates their history. Queer, trans, and BIPOC populations experience vexation in accounting for themselves in a condition where their own communities' history has been obscured from their perception, whether through deliberate miseducation or systemic erasure. These students did not author the standards nor the methods for their own self-narration. While an invitation to be included in university DEI efforts may be conciliatory, it does not connote authorship that engenders authentic self-narration of one's history. Here Buolamwini's coded gaze shows up in two ways, the university asks queer, trans, and BIPOC students to don a white mask to be viewed as safe by the public for consumption, while the university subsequently places a white mask over their DEI efforts to make them palatable and without risk to the administration, undermining the ability to imagine true change or innovation.

Arms Race

What might this overtaking of social justice work by professional DEI efforts look like as it unfolds on a college campus? From my vantage point within a social justice center at a mid-size regional public university in the Midwest, it was devastating. Fresh off years of being housed in a division with adequate resources and, if not an unyielding support of justice work, a dedicated theoretical orientation undergirding these efforts, the racial incidents of 2020, as well as the global pandemic fell like a hammer on our university. By summer of that year, our social justice units had been shuttled into a different division whose goal was to recruit

and retain students and the justice lens with which we formerly operated, and alongside the support, was constricting into a pinprick. Shortly after this reorganization, our university was lauded for diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts in a national publication renowned for making these declarations. The language in the publication made it clear that it was not public knowledge that our social justice centers had been removed from the division being recognized.

Metrics rolled about the number of students we could recruit and retain. Our predominantly white institution struggled to do either when it came to students of color, something everyone employed within these justice centers understood fundamentally, for a litany of reasons, whether it was the restrictive admission policies, the paltry financial aid awards, the inhospitable local surroundings, or the myriads of micro-aggressing professors and staff that populated the conservative campus where placing a bible verse in your email signature was commonplace. Big data were the words of the day. Cathy O'Neil author of *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (2016) and former Harvard mathematician who left the world of finance to co-found the human-centered artificial intelligence community, cites three criteria for big data becoming a Weapon of Math Destruction (WMD): opacity, unfairness and scale (p. 15). Saddled with the retention of students at "high risk" for leaving our institution, we endeavored to diffuse Weapons of Math Destruction launched at our office with the regularity of those fighting a war. Consider the victim advocate tasked with trying to explain why students who are survivors of gender-based violence may fail to be retained by our institution. The answer could be found in system failure. Those students were met with a lack of satisfactory response from our Title IX office, rigid attendance policies, and academic advisors who did not operate with a trauma informed approach causing them to leave the university. It was the data algorithms churned out from predictive software that cross-referenced attendance, midterm grades and dutiful visits to said advisor that told us who would succeed and who would fail. Additionally, contemplate the directive to serve students from populations for which we did not have data other than they *may* have checked a box on their FAFSA indicating they belonged to that identity category (independent, student parents, formerly in foster care, etc.) but not being given direct access to those students because of claims we were not quite high enough on the "need to know" FAFSA ladder. Imagine the challenge in tracking student success by demographics that left out populations we were expected to serve (LGBTQIA+ students, food and housing insecure students). We could bemoan, "this data is unclear, it is unjust, the magnitude is skewed to only produce results for specific identity populations." Or better still, present counter data, qualitative data on the impact of our work, or counter quantitative data that takes the intersections of our efforts into account that we had been gathering on our own student interactions, or try to reach these students in other ways, but nothing seemed to budge the numbers game. That, after all, is the intention of WMD, according to O'Neil:

> You cannot appeal to a WMD. That's part of their fearsome power. They do not listen. Nor do they bend. They're deaf not

> only to charms, threats, and cajoling but also to logic – even when there is good reason to question the data that feeds their conclusions. (2016, p. 10)

This arms race showed up in other ways. Having been moved to a different division during the summer, when students were least likely to notice, students still urged the university for systemic change around vast issues of inequity and large DEI efforts followed; enter the endless committees. Students have the benefit of trust when interacting with the administration, faculty, and staff have the burden of memory. As students charge administration buildings, lists of demands in hand, staff and faculty, often those who are Black and Brown, know what will happen next, a committee will form, of very limited authority, with an unreasonable workload, to commit those students' words into findings to be spun into working groups to labor onward in perpetuity. This then generates more findings and suggestions to be filed off somewhere, only to be unearthed the next time the administration is faced with a group of frustrated students with demands in hand.

2020 was no exception. The only divergent aspect was that the determined committees were now led by staff and faculty with little connection to our students or our justice work, and the endeavor was much more public, with the working groups boasting decidedly more prominent appointments. A commission at the University of South Carolina, who promised to take "decisive action" after exhaustively studying the University's ties to racism was found to have privately decided not to act on the commission's recommendations to formulate meaningful change in removing names from buildings, as requested, revealing that the commission's "efforts were used largely as cover for administrators' inaction" and "that university leaders were more focused on optics than on making real change" (Brown, 2021, para. 3). While a cover-up of that magnitude had never been alleged, this effort became predictably burdened by bloat, exhaustion, lack of intersectionality, and scarcity of follow-through. All told, "this compulsion forecloses discussion and remediation of universities' explicit role as architects, shepherds, or silent partners of trickle-down empathy ideology and discriminatory orthodoxy that directly undermines and stalls DEI; and more to the point, this purposeful tunnel vision belies their capacity to be dismantlers of this intertwining ideology and orthodoxy" (Ezell, 2021, p. 4). Tunnel vision, as Ezell uses the term, supports O'Neil's understanding of how WMDs function to push ill-conceived mathematical models at a vast and alarming rate, determining outcomes for folks who are outliers, and creating a toxic feedback loop (2016, p. 11). And while an unwieldy committee that spins out into a larger working group, or even becomes a vast network of faculty and staff laboring to create retention strategies for minoritized populations is not necessarily a faulty algorithm, it does belie the heart of the problem, the systems that support the university are unable to be radically altered or formally challenged because they provide the sustenance for the institution's power.

From Justice to Business

Revisiting Buolamwini's mask, and combining it with O'Neil's classification of WMD, enters the development model of DEI training: the personality test of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Doing good social justice training work is difficult. This takes well-trained staff and faculty time and must be generative and sustainable. In want of such resources, our university, and many others, look to tools like the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). A 50-question quiz that measures one's cultural competency as studied by a certified IDI administrator with test takers finding themselves somewhere on the cultural competence continuum (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Much has been made about the validity of the IDI, with Hammer Holding Incorporated (the LLC that owns the rights to the IDI) listing all the colleges, corporations, and nonprofits that use the tool (Hammer Holding LLC, 2022). However, what has not been asked regarding validity, at least loudly enough to matter, is about construct validity – that is, how does one test for the untestable concept of cultural competence? "Cultural competence is often used interchangeably with intercultural competence or cross-cultural competence, and, despite numerous definitions and frameworks, the concept of cultural competence remains ill-defined, overgeneralized, or assumed to be understood" (Punti & Dingle, 2021, p. 2). The fundamental question of what cultural competence is, and how one measures it hangs over such a tool. Perhaps even more concerning, the notion of cultural competency itself is flawed, and rejects addressing power and privilege, and maintains whiteness as the default. In other words, culture competence "positions individuals as experts – as cultural sages, brokers, or translators – empowered to be conduits for those who are different, which is another way of identifying the 'other' and labeling those without access to power" (Chui, 2021, para. 3).

Sitting in an IDI certification training, I posed such questions and others. Those included: What about intersectionality? What about those with trauma backgrounds? I was given curt answers copied and pasted from the company's website and a clear message that the trainers were intolerant of such a line of questioning. In digging, I found that Gemma Punti and Molly Dingel (2021) had found that the IDI did not work well for BIPOC students, a conclusion that was followed up by a response by none other than Hammer himself (2021), decrying their findings. In my own IDI certification training, I felt as though I was unsuccessfully being indoctrinated into a cult. The trainers encouraged us to use diagnostic terms while we practiced on each other, telling our colleagues they were in denial, or in polarization (sometimes defensively so), that they were minimizing, or that they might be accepting, or even adapting. I wondered about the potential to do real psychological harm. More pertinent to DEI trainings writ large, O'Neil's warnings rang in my ears. As members of our training posited making this part of employee professional development, and thus employee's performance review, I considered the consequences, and I was not alone. These one-stop DEI efforts "often will use comparative personality assessments to put colleagues, partners, and others in 'boxes.' This can lead those in less popular 'boxes' to feel excluded" (Everhardt, 2019, para. 4), and is that not the opposite of