

Introduction

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Shortly following the historic 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama—the United States’ first Black president—there were declarations from popular media sources, political pundits, and scholars alike that the country had arrived at a post-racial status (Burnham, 2009; Canason, 2009). This idea—or rather this illusion—of racial progress in our country was completely turned on its head when the electoral college selected Donald J. Trump as president, a candidate whose campaign in large part was based on the “racist idea” (Kendi, 2017) that our country’s greatness was tied to our success in excluding Mexican immigrants through the construction of a wall on the border. When asked to make sense of how our country could elect someone who openly engaged in racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetoric, author, journalist, and television commentator Howard Bryant (2020) noted that Trump’s election was a backlash, a repudiation of half a century of Black progress and the election of a Black president.

Since the election of President Trump there has been a noticeable spike in the number of reported hate crimes across the country. Indeed, empirical evidence indicates that Trump’s rise to power has emboldened white Americans, among others, to openly express and engage in racist ideas and behaviors (see, e.g., Edwards & Rushin, 2018). This “Trump effect,” as some have described it, has also been observed on college and university campuses. Data from the Department of Education indicate that the number of *reported* hate crimes (referring to offenses motivated by biases of race, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or disability) in higher education increased by 44 percent from 2016 to

2018 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). At the same time, we have also observed a rise in activism, with students protesting a host of issues related to race and racism on campuses (Eagan et al., 2015; Linder et al., 2019; Ndemanu, 2017; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). Consider the following examples just from 2019:

1. Students at the University of Oklahoma held an emotional rally in January, covered their mouths with duct tape, and marched with signs reading “Enough Is Enough” after a series of blackface incidents on campus were met with limited administrative response (Mangan, 2019).
2. The University of Georgia’s chapter of the NAACP held an open discussion on race in March to push for an administrative response after a video went viral on social media of white fraternity members mocking slavery by pretending to hit one another with belts and demanding that others “pick my cotton, n--” (Sicurella, 2019).
3. In August, student groups and faculty supporters at the University of Mississippi protested the campus administrative response after a photo was posted to social media of three white students carrying guns in front of a bullet-riddled sign dedicated to the murder of civil rights icon Emmett Till (Mathias, 2019).
4. The University of Arizona experienced two protests opposing racist incidents in fall 2019—the first in September, when the Arizona Black Student Union and hundreds of other students demonstrated against the campus police response to a racist verbal and physical assault of a Black student by two white peers (Anderson, 2019), and the second in November when members of the university’s Native Students Outreach, Access and Resiliency group (and supporters) demanded apologies and accountability in response to culturally offensive and othering comments by university president Robert C. Robbins (Ontiveros, 2019).
5. Students at Georgia Southern University protested in October 2019 after classmates burned copies of a book

by a visiting Cuban American speaker—Jennine Capó Crucet—after she made critical comments about white privilege and escalating discrimination against immigrant communities (Balingit, 2019).

6. In November 2019, approximately 300 students at Syracuse University staged a multiday #NotAgainSU sit-in on campus in response to a rash of racist incidents—including graffiti with slurs against African American, Asian, and Jewish students found in residence halls and academic buildings, and an incident where white fraternity members yelled racist slurs at a passing Black student (Randle, 2019). A second sit-in that began in February 2020 resulted in the university temporarily suspending 30 students for violating campus disruption rules. Significant online backlash resulted in the administration revoking the suspensions after a week (Associated Press, 2020).

These examples represent just a handful of a growing number of high-profile, race-related incidents in higher education that university faculty, staff, and administrators are grappling to respond to through reforms to institutional policies and practices that shape teaching and learning, student and campus life, and university leadership. The examples described previously also, however, underscore the sobering reality that race (still) matters, and racism (still) festers on our nation's college and university campuses, just as it does in our broader society. Thus, the “Trump effect” in higher education is a mere symptom of deeper, long-standing, systemic issues in our country related to race and racism that are reinforced through discourse, policy, and practice. For instance, just recently, the Supreme Court *again* deliberated the constitutionality of race-conscious policies in postsecondary admissions in *Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. Harvard University et al.* (see Garces & Poon, 2018). Although in the end, the court decided in favor of Harvard's approach to considering race in admissions, the continued attacks on these policies in higher education are emblematic of our country's resistance to accepting responsibility for its long-standing history of race-based exclusion and discrimination, which continue to negatively impact patterns of postsecondary participation and degree completion, especially for Black and Latinx students.

Despite a considerable increase in college enrollment rates for racially minoritized groups, data indicate that Black and Latinx students are still more likely to be concentrated at two-year, for-profit, and less-selective public institutions than their white peers (Espinosa et al., 2019, p. 37). These institutions tend to have lower degree completion rates (Ginder et al., 2018) and much higher loan default rates (Miller, 2017) than other colleges and universities, thus limiting students' ability to realize the economic returns of going to college and earning an undergraduate degree (Jones & Nichols, 2020). Generally, however, postsecondary degree attainment rates vary significantly by race and ethnicity across institutional types. Recent data published in a report by the American Council on Education indicate that in 2017, Asian American adults had the highest level of educational attainment, with 55.4 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher, followed by white adults at 38 percent. By contrast, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (25.2%), Black (24.2%), Native American (20.5%), and Latinx (17.3%) rates of attainment were significantly lower (Espinosa et al., 2019, p. 8). It is important to note, however, that while aggregate statistics on Asian Americans suggest that they have the highest level of degree attainment, this figure masks significant ethnic disparities within this racial group (Museus et al., 2015), particularly for those who identify as Laotian (12%), Hmong (12%), Cambodian (14%), and Vietnamese (27%) (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2011, p. 31).

To mitigate disparities and address equity gaps in the postsecondary education experiences and outcomes among white and racially minoritized students, education researchers have advanced several promising frameworks, concepts, and a host of recommendations to guide institutional policy and practice. Consider, for instance, Museus's (2014) culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model, which offers insight into the environmental factors that maximize student engagement and success among racially minoritized students. Strayhorn (2012, 2018) advanced a theoretical model of college students' sense of belonging, which has been used widely by higher education leaders, faculty, and student affairs practitioners, among others, to structure curricular and co-curricular opportunities and experiences for minoritized students in ways that are inclusive and affirming for all students. Smith (2011, 2015) developed an institutional diversity framework outlining the aspects of colleges and universities that must be engaged to foster diversity. And the Equity Scorecard out of the Center for Urban Education at the

University of Southern California was developed as a framework to guide practitioner inquiry into institutional policies and practices that exacerbate racial inequities on campus (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

Despite these advancements, along with the voluminous contributions from empirical research over the past 30 years (e.g., Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Garces & Jayakumar, 2014; Harris & Bensimon, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper et al., 2009; Hurtado et al., 1999; Museus & Park, 2015; Park, 2018; Solorzano, 1998; Stewart, 2013; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2013; Waterman, 2012), remarkable research-to-practice gaps exist in higher education (Kezar, 2000). Maxey and Kezar (2016) argue that many practitioners and policymakers “rely more on personal experience, practical knowledge, and anecdotal evidence in responding to the challenges they face” (p. 1046). This is not surprising given the fact that many practitioners and policymakers face increasingly complex and fast-paced conditions for decision-making, unique local challenges, and accountability demands for immediate results (e.g., Cohen & Garet, 1991; Kezar, 2000). And researchers, unfortunately, often overlook the complexities and challenges associated with applying or implementing recommendations from their work to institutional policy and practice, particularly in the area of racial equity, and at white-serving institutions that in large part remain resistant to structural and systemic change.

To address this gap between research and practice in the area of racial equity, the collection of chapters featured in this book is undergirded by a concept we refer to as translational racial equity research-practice (TRERP). This concept refers to the process in which practitioner-informed, scientific discoveries that center race, racism, and other interlocking systems of oppression are translated into institutional practice and policy interventions that aim to improve the material conditions of racially/ethnically minoritized people. Dominant research-to-practice perspectives have assumed a linear relationship in which insights from research flow unidirectionally into practice settings (Stein & Coburn, 2010) like college and university campuses. TRERP, on the other hand, recognizes practitioners, especially those of color, as part and parcel to knowledge production. The hyphen (-) in “research-practice” signifies a complex, mutually constitutive relationship, a nexus, in which insights from each influence the other. Our conceptualization of TRERP is informed by elements of critical race theory (Bell, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), research on organizational change for racial equity (Ben-

simon & Malcolm, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Stewart, 2018), and scholarship on the relationship between research and practice (Stein & Coburn, 2010). The following propositions form the basis for TRERP:

1. Understanding and interpreting social phenomena is necessary but insufficient for *changing* the material conditions of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) in higher education and society more broadly. Racial equity research in higher education must be rooted in a transformative paradigm that challenges and dismantles structures and practices that promote white supremacy and reproduce race-based disparities. We advocate for what Denzin (2015) refers to as “ethically responsible activist research” (p. 32)—work that makes a difference in the lives of institutionally marginalized people.
2. Racial equity “problems” in higher education must be framed and represented in their full context (e.g., legacy of discrimination, role of systems/structures in producing inequities) to ensure equity-minded policy and practice recommendations (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Hankivsky et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2021).
3. Practitioners who “work on the ground,” especially BIPOC, are essential to the formulation and identification of racial equity “problems” worthy of scholarly attention. Indeed, practitioners are valuable co-constructors of knowledge whose expertise is important for the development of translational racial equity research and its implementation across various areas of educational practice.
4. Racial equity research-practice in higher education must anticipate and account for the ways in which white supremacy and other interlocking systems of oppression operate to mitigate and undermine organizational change. For instance, diversity and inclusion discourses and programs are often used as a tool by university leaders to appease their constituents (e.g., BIPOC students), while maintaining the status quo and avoiding institutional change (Iverson, 2007; Stewart, 2017).

5. To realize racial equity in higher education, multifocal strategies and reforms are needed that fundamentally alter how colleges and universities function, a process that Kezar (2014) refers to as transformational change. Similarly, translational racial equity research-practice emphasizes dismantling oppressive structures and the adoption of humanizing and dignity-affirming policies, practices, and processes.

The authors included in this volume address a small sample of salient problems that demand the collective attention of college and university leaders, administrators, and faculty who envision a future for higher education that is more racially diverse, inclusive, and equitable. Through the promising and actionable recommendations and strategies presented in each of the chapters, we hope to aid education stakeholders in moving from “equity talk to equity walk” (McNair et al., 2019). That is, to accepting personal and institutional responsibility for, and committing to address, systemic inequities disparately impacting racially minoritized communities on college and university campuses.

Overview of Chapters

Racial Equity on College Campuses is organized into three major parts: (1) University Leadership, (2) Teaching and Learning; and (3) Student and Campus Life. Part 1 considers the role of college and university leadership in advancing racial equity and offers actionable recommendations and considerations for transformative change. Part 2, Teaching and Learning, zeros in on the role and potential of classroom curriculum, as well as instructional practices and dispositions, in facilitating transformative change for racial equity. In part 3, Student and Campus Life, the scope is broadened to consider the experiences of racially minoritized students on campus generally, and how institutional resources, human and financial, can be marshalled to meet the diverse needs of students.

Across all three areas of the book, authors expertly connect theory and research to practice, with critical attention to the complexities associated with implementing and enacting their recommendations. The chapters in the book focus primarily on historically white institutions (HWIs) due to their historical legacies of racism and settler colonialism

(see Anderson, 1988; Dancy et al., 2018), though their content is likely relevant across other institutional contexts. We also note that HWIs have been the primary sites of the growing number of racist incidents around the country, demonstrating their urgent need for clear and actionable recommendations to support their transformation into racially inclusive and equitable environments.

University Leadership. Part 1 of this book explores how issues of racial equity can and should be addressed at the level of institutional leadership and policymaking. Grounded in conversations with governing boards, hiring committees, and administrative leaders, these chapters stress that equity-minded leadership (at all levels) is a requirement for meaningful institutional transformation.

- In the opening chapter of this part, Román Liera takes up the specific institutional task of faculty hiring by tracing the myriad ways that hiring practices center white norms and send overt and covert signals that racially minoritized applicants are not welcome or competitive. “Best practices” for hiring diverse faculty often fail, Liera argues, because they do not take into account local organizational barriers or sufficiently interrogate departmental, disciplinary, or institutional discourses. In order to dismantle these barriers, he proposes a process of inquiry that guides hiring committees through an interrogation of their strategies for selecting and preparing committee members, recruiting applicants, drafting job announcements, outlining hiring criteria, and assessing candidates. He concludes with recommendations for how campuses and departments might address racial disparities in faculty hiring by encouraging committees to question gaps between their stated values of diversity/inclusivity and their enacted practices that persist in centering dominant cultural (white, male, middle-class, etc.) experience.
- In “Leveraging Campus-wide Leadership Collaborations for Equity,” Amanda Taylor and Evelyn Ambriz present an insightful discussion of the power and potential of campus-wide collaborations for racial equity. Specifically, this chapter focuses on exploring the phenomenon of diversity and inclusion councils made up of faculty, staff, administrators, and students that are often commissioned after racist incidents

or moments of increased student activism on campus. In order for these councils to be more than public relations gestures, the authors argue, careful attention must be paid to the recruitment of members, the power differentials between invited groups, and strategies for ensuring that the councils engage in meaningful work toward racial equity that can be maintained and institutionalized. The chapter draws insights from the Presidential Council for Diversity and Inclusion at American University (where Taylor serves as assistant vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion) in framing its recommendations for forming, fostering, and facilitating campus-wide leadership councils engaged in equity work.

- In “The Role of Boards in Advancing the Equity Agenda,” Felicia Commodore, Raquel M. Rall, and Demetri L. Morgan close out the part with discussion of a population that is often left out of conversations about racial equity efforts on campus—members of the board of trustees. An equity-minded board has the power to institutionalize equity efforts and to provide necessary supports when these efforts are challenged, but individual board members are rarely socialized to see equity as central or even relevant to their work. Troublingly, boards also continue to be predominantly white, male, and drawn from business and industry. The authors argue, however, that boards have a fiduciary duty of loyalty, care, and obedience to the mission of the institution, which in turn means that they have a duty to uphold, promote, and guide the institution’s espoused racial equity commitments. Defining equity as a fiduciary duty allows the authors to reimagine the work of the board—including strategic planning, examination of institutional data, funding and budget allocation, hiring and accountability, and stakeholder management—and provide recommendations for how these tasks might be turned toward combating racial disparities and continued forms of exclusion and oppression.

Teaching and Learning. Part 2 of the book focuses on the classroom and other contexts of instructional interactions and pedagogical training. It draws from the experiences of faculty, instructors, and teacher education practitioners who report continued and escalating challenges

in their efforts to create equitable curriculum and pedagogy in the time of Trump. In this part, the practitioners considered are not limited to those who exclusively work as instructors, nor are teaching and learning conceptualized as occurring solely within formal classrooms. Thus, pedagogical strategies are presented for promoting racial equity across diverse learning contexts.

- In the opening chapter of this part, Paula Adamo, Liliana Diaz Solodukhin, Janeice Z. Mackey, Adrienne Martinez, and Judy Marquez Kiyama argue that, despite increased focus on racial equity in higher education, curriculum and pedagogy remain elitist and structured by “rules” that are raced, classed, and gendered. Their chapter, “(Re)Shaping Higher Education Classrooms with Inclusive Pedagogies,” explores the power of naming and transforming these traditional rules and norms by embracing inclusive practices that reflect the histories, knowledge, contributions, and lives of racially minoritized students. The authors provide examples from their own teaching practices to provide embodied context for their review and conclude with questions to guide instructors looking to (re)shape their classrooms for inclusive praxis.
- In “Developing Intersectional Consciousness: A De/colonial Approach to Researching Pedagogy in the Higher Education Context,” Mildred Boveda encourages researchers and instructors alike to develop the intersectional consciousness and competence necessary to grapple with the multiple, interrelated systems of oppression that affect students’ lives within and beyond the classroom. She offers overviews of two protocols that she and colleagues have developed over the course of a multiyear study of teacher education and special education programs. The intersectional competence measure helps instructors measure their preparation and capacity to engage in pedagogy that recognizes systemic oppressions, while the intersectional consciousness collaboration protocols give guidance in how to put that knowledge and preparation into practice. Boveda concludes by posing a series of reflective prompts for researchers and faculty to engage in de/colonial ethics regarding power, positionality,

and complicity within the hegemonic structures of Westernized, essentialist, and otherwise oppressive ways of being and knowing.

- Finally, Ericka Roland closes this part with a discussion of how scenes from popular films addressing racial issues (like *Get Out*, *Crash*, and *The Hate You Give*) can be used as cultural artifacts to facilitate dialogues among diverse groups of college students. Her chapter, “From the Theater to Higher Education: Using Movies to Facilitate Intergroup Racial Dialogues,” draws on personal reflection on her own experiences using the film *Dear White People* in the classroom and research on intergroup racial dialogue to introduce a seven-step process for selecting and introducing films as curricular/pedagogical content, and for facilitating risky and authentic intergroup dialogues that foster critical self-reflection, stimulating discussion, and equitable outcomes.

Student and Campus Life. The final part in this book focuses on issues and topics addressed by practitioners working in student affairs and student services roles directly impacted by racist incidents, student activism, and the persistent tensions of the “Trump effect.” Practitioners who informed the discussions in this part were particularly concerned about student experiences outside of the classroom, and the direct interpersonal and systemic challenges of the current moment. They addressed challenges in campus climate and the potential for student affairs professionals to do more than merely promote diversity by also serving as social justice advocates and allies for transformational change. Chapters in this part examine the issues raised by demographic differences between practitioners and the students they serve and the results of mismatches in experience and understanding. The part also highlights questions related to populations that are both underserved and less often treated as significant constituencies, such as undocumented students and Black students from rural areas.

- Susana M. Muñoz and Stephen Santa-Ramírez’s chapter, “Reimagining Institutionalized Support for Undocumented and DACA College Students: A Critical Approach,” opens by recognizing that one symptom of the “Trump effect” has been the exacerbation of overtly anti-(im)migrant climates

on many college campuses. This type of climate (and the political rhetoric and state actions that inform it) demands that campus practitioners interrogate and reimagine new ways of building institutional support for undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students. Using case studies from their own campuses—Colorado State University and Arizona State University, respectively—the authors present strategies for supporting students with immediate need, while also working to create transformative change toward four interrelated concepts of justice: labor, intersectional, reparative, and epistemic.

- Darris R. Means, Aaron T. George, and Jenay Willis interrogate another troubling postelection narrative in “Rethinking Postsecondary Education Access and Success to Advance Racial Equity for Rural Black Students.” The authors observe that, following the 2016 election, journalists and education scholars alike turned significant attention to rural voters without college degrees who overwhelmingly voted for Trump. Research and funding sources have been directed to college access and success programs for rural students in subsequent years, but little attention has been paid to the diversity of experiences and backgrounds of these rural students. Too often *rural* has been presumed to mean *white*. Means and colleagues shift this focus, therefore, to explicitly center the access and success of rural Black students and provide recommendations for how policy and practice might shift to center the communities, experiences, knowledges, and practices of this underserved population.
- In “Beyond ‘Woke Play’: Challenging Performative Allyship in Student Affairs’ ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’ Programming,” Ali Watts expresses concern about (white) liberal inclinations in the Trump era to perform “woke” political consciousness without making deeper, and often riskier, commitments to activism and institutional change. In particular, she explores the complicity of Student Affairs departments and graduate programs in promoting a performative and surface-level approach to racial equity that leaves practitioners ill-prepared to engage in systemic critique and

deconstruction of systems of oppression, exclusion, and erasure. The chapter ends with a series of recommendations based on the American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) "Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization" that help practitioners move beyond "woke play" to the serious work of institutional transformation.

As racial tensions mount around the country, especially in our nation's colleges and universities, that aim to undermine progress toward racial equity, access to research-based findings that can be translated into concrete recommendations for practitioners is increasingly important. We hope that the collection of chapters featured in this book add to the proverbial arsenal of tools and strategies that can be deployed in the work of many, whatever their context may be, such that they are a threat to the forces that conspire to maintain the status quo.

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