Pathways to Inclusion:

Identity, Difference, and Institutional Innovation

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“How many students are we talking about, really?”
Figure 1. Trends in U.S. Citizens/Permanent Resident Earned Doctorates by Select Race/Ethnicity, 2005 to 2015

Source: National Science Foundation, Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2015, Table 19
Takeaways

● Universities can be unwelcoming and even hostile to minoritized individuals and perspectives.

● Research methods and institutional assessments are insufficient for revealing (and making space to address) equity gaps.
Data

- Published literature
- Qualitative survey responses and focus group interviews with doctoral student writers (IRB 998118–2)
- Narratives of lived experience → Reconceptualize inquiry beyond a binary framework that privileges science (Hendry, 2009)
The Imperial Ivory Tower


- Reflected in differentiated labor expectations and black bodies as property (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018).
Universities as Unwelcoming

- Microaggressions (Gomez et al; Lugo-Lugo; Sue)
- Presumed incompetent and made to feel unwelcome (Allen; Gutierrez y Muhs et al; Martinez)
- Tokenism and acceptable blackness (Alvarez et al; Burrows; Green; Niemann)
- Colonial oppression reinforced onto-epistemologically (Alcoff; Baszile; Fricker; Godbee; Hinsdale; King; Maldonado-Torres)
Gertrude’s Story: Layer 1

“I took a course, and the final product in that course was to have developed your proposal. And he [the professor] kinda poo-pooed my proposal. He said, ‘Oh that doesn’t . . . Eh . . .’ He was like, ‘Meh.’ It was also, he was quantitative and he said that his area of expertise—he said that up front—was quantitative research. So I created another idea . . . but I didn’t LOVE it. It was one of those, it was another idea I wanted to explore . . . . He liked it and I went with that, but it wasn’t deeply, deeply embedded in me.”
“Mentoring outsiders calls for an open, responsive approach to students—one that welcomes not only their bodies and social experiences, but also the knowledge they bring and the questions they wish to research” (Hinsdale, 2015).
Gertrude’s Story: Layer 2

“I’m in two different spaces because the School of Ed is trying to—and recruited me to come there—because they are trying to take on a really human rights and social justice umbrella in their program. . . . The reality on the inside was not that experience for me.”

“And while they say that and recruit people like me, they need to say up front, we need you to help us do this work. We’re bringing a different kind of person to the program to challenge us. And of course that was eventually what we would do.”
Epistemic Injustice

- Difference is viewed as a barrier; ways of knowing are discounted and dismissed; intellectual courage and confidence are *eroded* (Fricker; Alcoff; Godbee).
Marie: “Enough rope”

“In my department, like I said, there’s no structure. We don’t have exams; we don’t have anything like that. They want to encourage us the freedom to develop our own projects, our own ideas. But it’s not so simple and it’s kind of like they call it—everybody calls it—giving you enough rope to hang yourself.”
“It’s a risky track”

“. . . You either associate yourself with a faculty member who is doing existing work and you build your work on that existing body of knowledge . . . or you start a new conversation—which is the harder track because you don’t have an apprentice[ship]. And it’s a risky track, right? You know. You have to, you’re betting that people will care about your conversation.”

“I came up with all these new ideas because I had all this freedom, but the cost of that freedom was to have no support, no funding. . .”
“It transformed everything”

“And [now] there’s so like much interest in my work, that now all the people who were not giving me support before are like, all talking to publishers about getting me a book project, and introducing me to people in order to get me a job. And it’s just SO different that I realize that it’s because they think that I’m—I mean I am, I decided once I got the interest in my work, I was like, Oh, you mean I have something worthwhile to say? And then I started entertaining the idea of the academic market. . . . It transformed everything.”
Creating Community


- Scholarly communities, multiple mentors, co-chaired committees, coauthoring across rank/discipline (Bosanquet & Cahir, 2016; Maher & Say, 2016).

- Student-led initiatives (e.g. MiSci Writers).

- Emotional support for writers (Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2018).
I went to my committee to let them know that I didn’t know exactly what they were expecting for the prospectus, and I got the sense that they didn’t know either, because I got such ambiguous answers [laughing]. Like, “Oh, ask your chair,” and then my chair would say, “Oh, why don’t you ask your committee to see what they’re expecting,” so they would kind of like say to ask somebody else, or that was their direction. So that, I thought to myself, Oh, they don’t even know what I should submit. [laughing]
Writing Communities

● Siobhan: “We need cultures of mentoring.”
● Jade’s department: “Everyone helps you shape the project.”
● Social interaction is positively inflected (Tarabochia & Madden, forthcoming 2018); affirmative work for SOC.
● Negative mentoring experiences are prevalent and formative (Tarabochia & Madden, 2018).
Graduate Writing in an Expansive Frame

Dissertation by A. D. Carson (2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LrWYtJ7g8g

http://phd.aydeethegreat.com/
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● Research methods and institutional assessments are insufficient for revealing (and making space to address) equity gaps.
“from the vantage point of the colonized, the word ‘research’ is inextricably to European imperialism and colonialism. . . . Just knowing that someone measured our faculties by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and comparing the amount of millet seeds to the capacity for thought offends our sense of who and what we are.” (Smith, 1999).
“How many students are we talking about, really?”
What can be done to improve support for graduate student writers at your institution?

Kindness.
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