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A long road: Patterns and prospects for social equity, diversity, and inclusion in public administration

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Abstract

Public Administration, the field's oldest journal, is now 100 years old. Despite this centenary, it has only been relatively recently that scholars have examined questions of: (1) how diverse, equitable, and inclusive the field is; (2) how oppressive administrative structures marginalize groups; and (3) what principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mean globally. We seek to contribute to this conversation by reflecting on what is currently known about answers to these questions, especially from global perspectives. We do this by presenting five purposively selected vignettes, each on some dimension of DEI. We frame and analyze these vignettes using Gooden's "name, blame, and claim" framework. Reflections are offered regarding how the field can better center and achieve DEI.

1 | INTRODUCTION

It is a growing normative expectation that public institutions should be diverse (reflective of societies), equitable (fair), and inclusive (making all feel welcome) (Riccucci, 2021; Sabharwal et al., 2014), and create public services that are accessible, procedurally fair, of high and equal quality for all groups, and that promote positive outcomes (Johnson & Svara, 2015). Furthermore, such institutions must *name* inequities (identify and admit issues), *blame* inequities (understand cause and effects and who/what is responsible), and *claim* inequities (take active, diverse, inclusive, and meaningful steps forward to promote fairness for all) (Gooden, 2014).

Interest in examining these questions is growing (Riccucci, 2021), including globally (Gooden, 2020; Johansen, 2019), especially given how public institutions across the world are culpable in creating, maintaining, and

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extending systems of disadvantage and oppression due to bias and discrimination regarding race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and more (Alkadry & Blessett, 2010; Blessett, 2018; Starke et al., 2018). The need to understand what diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mean has never been more poignant.

These questions are ever-more poignant given that the field's oldest journal, *Public Administration*, is turning 100 this year. Given this context and to reflect on the 100th anniversary, we address this question: *What is currently known about DEI in public administration, especially the causes and effects of inequities and what public administration institutions can do to address those inequities?* To address this question, we present five DEI purposively selected global vignettes. For each vignette, we assess what is currently known about the causes and effects of the DEI issue and what public administration institutions are doing to address that issue. We conclude by using Gooden's *name*, *blame*, and *claim* framework to reflect on patterns and prospects for promoting DEI in research, theory, and practice. We caution that this piece is *not* a comprehensive compendium of the topic but, rather, presents several key dimensions to consider when reflecting on where the field has come, where it is, and where it can go in the future.

2 | VIGNETTE 1: DEI IN THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REGION

The Sub-Saharan Africa Region (SSAR) region is a culturally and ethnically diverse area with 1.2 billion people across 48 countries. For cultural and socio-political reasons, SSAR countries are grouped together while countries in northern Africa are categorized with the Middle East. All SSAR countries, minus Ethiopia, were colonized by Western countries, and the region struggles with extreme poverty (more than 50% of the global poor are in the SSAR). Still, in 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported the SSAR is home to five of the fastest growing economies: Ghana, South Sudan, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Cote d'Ivoire. Despite this economic growth, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) noted that 10 of the 19 most unequal countries globally are in the region, and limited state distributive capacities perpetuate biased governance that reinforce ethnic and gender inequalities (Odusola et al., 2017).

In the SSAR, ethnic and gender inequalities are prevalent whereby women and ethnic minorities are socially, economically, and politically disadvantaged throughout civil and civil life. Hence, DEI conversations in the SSAR center around effective strategies to empower women and ethnic minorities in the health, economic, and political spheres.

Ethnic heterogeneity is a hallmark of the SSAR. The SSAR is home to the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, especially Uganda and Liberia (Alesina et al., 2003). In their seminal work that maps global ethnic diversity, Alesina et al. (2003) show that 20 of the most diverse countries in the world are located in the SSAR. Ethnic diversity is known to have a profound impact on political, social, and economic structures of countries across the region. In many countries across the SSAR, ethnic minorities, including those with multiple forms of marginalized identities like women, are often less organized, less likely to be politically and economically empowered, and absent from decision-making roles. Wimmer et al. (2009) further argue that civil conflicts in the SSAR are predominantly driven by ethnic conflict. Extreme marginalization of groups leads to between-group hostility and antagonism. Recent history of the Rwanda genocide and civil war in the 1990s, resulting in over 800,000 deaths, demonstrates the extent to which ethnic conflict leads to group hostility. Yet, Rwanda's ethnic-based conflict is not the first and only that the region has seen in recent history. The 1967 Nigerian civil war resulted in over 100,000 civilian casualties.

Although women make up roughly half of the SSAR's population, they only contribute 33% of the region's GDP (Moodley et al., 2019). Globally, the SSAR stands behind the Middle East and North Africa on gender inequality performance (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019). The United Nation Development Fund Gender Inequality Index (GII) report demonstrates that women in the SSAR experience more inequalities in access to health and education services as well as in political and economic participation (UNDP, 2019). Lack of access to maternal and reproductive health services are two areas with serious challenges. In 2019, the regional labor force participation stood at only 63% (World Bank, 2021). Gender gaps are also evident in political empowerment. The Progress is

evident. Rwanda and Ethiopia have achieved progress in reaching gender parity in women's parliamentary participation. Liberia, Mauritius, and Ethiopia have seen female heads of states.

Taken together, inequalities in the SSAR threaten underlying rights of women and marginalized ethnic groups and threaten their rights to equitably participate in society and the economy and to exercise decision-making agency. Furthermore, disparate access to opportunities and resources yields power imbalances and compromises to individual agency. Another noteworthy implication of gender and ethnic based inequalities is their impact on human development, which the UNDP defines as the process of measuring development from the viewpoint of quality (richness) of individuals' life. Fair access to opportunities, resources, and services is central to improving individuals' lives and capabilities. Access inequalities to basic human services have implications for marginalized groups' health as well as economic and political empowerment. Access to formal education is vital for human capital development, and access to adequate health services dictate the individuals' quality of life. Societies with inequitable participation of women and ethnic minority groups in political office, public leadership, and civil societies compromise on advancing inclusive, responsive, and democratic processes.

Larger social and institutional players decide on active players in the economy, as well as in social and in public spheres. Social institutions set norms that define the terms in which individuals and groups engage in private and public lives. Social norms established in contexts where women and ethnic minorities are marginalized are key barriers to equality (UNDP, 2019). Biased social norms prescribe roles and set the norm for power relations between dominant and marginalized groups. They also shape individual, group and institutional behaviors that preserve power in the hands of dominant groups. Social norms can be used as tools to maintain underlying power structures. Power imbalances in return embolden members that identify with dominant (elite) groups. Both social norms and power imbalance affect multiple forms of gender and ethnic inequalities, including access to services, resources, and opportunities as well as violence against marginalized groups (UNDP, 2019). Biased social norms and power imbalances are structural barriers to foster an equitable society in the SSAR.

Uncovering gender and ethnic inequality in the SSAR calls for interrogating individual beliefs and social norms. Additionally, it is imperative to reflect on the role of institutions. Public institutions are places where resources are allocated and distributed, opportunities are created, and services are delivered. Public institutions reflect social norms and policy preferences. Effects of policy decisions are also made evident in how they are implemented through institutions. In the SSAR, one cannot ignore remnants of colonial institutions and how they continue to influence policy preferences and institutional outcomes. Following independence, for most countries in the SSAR, state performance has not improved, and corruption became pervasive (Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006). Colonialism led to social stratification, perpetuating patriarchal systems and ethnic dominance marginalizing women in particular. Colonial legacies continue in the disparate investment in social infrastructures like health and education services and social stratification allowing dominant groups to benefit more than others (Van de Walle, 2009).

The role that organizational diversity management strategies play in advancing gender and ethnic equalities in the SSAR is an area that is yet to be explored. In four ways, diversity management efforts can shift the opportunity landscape and equalize the playing field for marginalized groups in the SSAR.

First, diversity management strategies that promote equity and inclusion can shift social norms around women and ethnic minorities' engagement in public life. Pushing for active engagement of marginalized community members such as in key decision-making roles can improve on existing policy preferences and policy implementation including program delivery. The process of forming equity-centered policies that are responsive to the needs of a diverse citizenry calls for a participatory process where representatives of citizenry groups are engaged in the policy making process.

Second, diversity management is a tool that can foster representation and engagement of marginalized groups like women and non-dominant ethnic groups. Organizations committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are also actively working at shifting power dynamics that are often at play. As marginalized community members are encouraged to engage in decision-making roles, power imbalances can shift, consequently breaking away from social norms around the role women and ethnic minorities play in society and in organizations. Moreover, public

facing institutions that have a diverse pool of workforce from the top down and foster substantive engagement across the board help shift social norms and expectations around traditionally set social roles.

Third, referencing the scholarly work around representative bureaucracy, one can expect diverse institutions and a representative bureaucracy to perform better and meet the needs of the citizenry. Particularly for women in the SSAR, programs that cater to health and educational needs are vital to close the service need gap. Hence, diversifying the workforce in these sectors and fostering the engagement of women in health and education policy design and implementation is imperative.

Last, institutional diversity management practices can be a means to foster a culture of coexistence and co-production. In a society where ethnic fragmentation is the lead cause for much of the political conflict in the region, diverse institutions play an important role in sending the signal for co-production.

3 | VIGNETTE 2: WOMEN IN SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE IN ASIA

In 2015, the United Nations developed and adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and two explicitly focus on social equity and justice (United Nations, 2021b). Goal 5 calls for gender equality, whereas Goal 10 focuses on reducing inequities among the most vulnerable populations, including women, indigenous people, people with disabilities, children, and older people.

Addressing gender discrimination requires increasing representation of women in all decision-making positions—political (parliaments and congresses), managerial, and senior leadership roles in the government (Ahmed, 2018). Although Asia grapples with societal and workplace issues related to diversity, none is as significant as gender. Women make up half of the world's population, but do not constitute 50% of decision-making positions. This section examines the diversity, equity and inclusion of women in civil service positions in Asia, which is home to 60% of the world's population. Although it is impossible to discuss women and their participation in civil services in the entire continent of Asia, the section focuses on nations in South and East Asia, where the majority of people live.

3.1 | Gaps

Research trends emerge in South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan), East Asia (China, Japan, and South Korea), and South East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore). In most countries, while women occupy low ranking positions in the civil service, most high-ranking positions are held by men, creating a deficit of women in leadership in critical policy-making roles (Ansari, 2018; Nilmi & Thoradeniya, 2018; Paudel, 2018, Singh, 2018; Zafarullah, 2000).

Most Asian countries' civil service systems recognize the importance of representation and have implemented policies and administrative reform agendas to meet societal needs. Although most civil service systems in Asia are based on merit systems (competitive examinations), additional provisions are made to ensure representation of women in the public sector (Moon & Hwang, 2013). For example, the Korean government emphasized the need for a diverse public sector workforce, aiming to increase representation of women and people with disabilities. South Korea has passed laws like the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1989, Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act of 1999, and introduced a quota system to ensure more women are recruited into the public sector (Kim, 2019). Similar policies are active in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Japan. Civil service systems in Bhutan, China, India, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Indonesia are entirely based on merit, disadvantaging women from underprivileged backgrounds. In 2019, the number of women who qualified in the Indian civil services is close to 24%, but this number shrinks to 10.45% for senior ranks (Singh, 2018). Thus, despite affirmative action policies, which are referred to quota or reservation systems in most Asian countries, the overall numbers of women in civil service remains low (Kabir, 2013; Panday, 2008).

3.2 | Causes

Several factors contribute to the paucity of women in senior ranking roles in Asian governments' bureaucracies. Three are especially critical: Historical/structural; social/cultural; and political/bureaucratic.

3.2.1 | Historical/structural

Women have been disadvantaged and relegated to second-class citizenship status and faced oppression throughout education, politics, health, and markets. Women in Asian societies have been subject to age-old norms, religious, and cultural taboos restricting mobility, social status, inheritance, and property rights (Zafarullah, 2000). In many parts of Asia, women are denied access to property and often are unaware of their legal rights (Bhagat, 2017; Liaw, 2008) and kept-out of the workplace (Cooke, 2010). Women in South Asia, China, Japan, and South Korea (the main economies in Asia) are expected to be homemakers and are subject to patriarchal gender norms and stereotypes, slowing career progression and access to learning the normative language and institutions in the field, thus denying them equal access at entry levels with few prospects for authority and agency (Haque, 2003; Panday, 2008).

Traditionally, public organizations are gendered. Masculine traits like assertiveness, domination, risk taking, and detachment are valued more than feminine traits of displaying emotion and care (Guy & Newman, 2004; Kanter, 1975; Meier et al., 2006; Riccucci, 2009; Stivers, 2002; Sabharwal, 2015). This masculine bias means that equal opportunity strategies by themselves are unlikely to foster equity (Stivers, 2002).

The bias is stronger in Asian cultures with strong patriarchies wherein bureaucratic principles juxtapose feminine roles emphasizing domestic chores and caregiving. These structural biases consider women powerless and lacking authority, thus excluding them from roles dominated by men or confining them to lower levels in the government (Bhattacharya, 2011; Kanter, 1977). Prior to independence, women in India were barred from holding high-ranking, Class I positions; postindependence, they were eligible for Class II and clerical positions. Although women have made considerable progress in qualifying for civil service (gateway to holding administrative positions in the government), they are still "treated as subjects or recipients of policy decisions rather than full participants in them" (Singh, 2018, p. 179). Similar or worse trends are evident elsewhere. In Pakistan, for example, it was not until the administrative reforms in 1974 that women could serve in "Audit and Accounts Service, Pakistan Military Accounts Service, Customs Service, and Income Tax or Inland Revenue Service" (Ansari, 2018, p. 212). Across Asia, gender-neutrality might be promoted through various laws and acts, yet organizations continue to be defined as "sex-neutral machines" dominated by masculine norms and structures (Kanter, 1977).

3.2.2 | Social/cultural norms

Work and family conflict arising from strongly defined sex roles in helps lead to glass ceilings experienced by women in government (Choi & Park, 2014; Zafarullah, 2000). Despite more women attaining an education and entering the workforce, the primary expectation for women in many countries is to fulfill domestic roles while also working long hours. While these gender roles and societal norms exist throughout the world, they are stronger in Asia given the deep-rooted Confucian cultures (East and Southeast Asia) and patriarchal norms codified in religious texts and scriptures, colonial legacy, and centuries of foreign-rule (South Asia) (Dhungana, 2021; Haque, 2015; Olivelle, 2004; Sangari & Vaid, 1990). Given familial responsibilities, women in the civil service are often not taken seriously, are passed on for promotion, or face discrimination in transfers and placement (Choi & Park, 2014).

In the Indian subcontinent, the "wife-mother syndrome pervades the behavior and role performance of all women […], and it socializes all women to avoid success, to be unambitious" (Kabir, 2013, p. 438). In a survey of 53 women from the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), Ahmed and Jahan (2018) found that more than half the

participants indicated they were posted to less important positions and were evaluated harsher than men counterparts. Additionally, more than 33% observed they were denied training opportunities, and a majority indicated that organizational policies and structures favored men.

Furthermore, women are kept out of networking opportunities since most events happen after work hours, making it challenging for women with family responsibilities. Choi and Park (2014) interviewed 27 South Korean women civil servants in mid-managerial and entry level government positions and found women were subject to gender stereotypes and were less likely to be included in informal networks. Such inclusion can extend to informal gatherings, yet mentorship by other women can be critical to promoting gender equity (Choi & Park, 2014).

Given social constructions of women as caretakers, they are often seen in "soft-ministries" like child welfare, women's welfare, education, and culture (Singh, 2018), and less likely to hold portfolios in male-dominated fields such as Finance and Defense. The gendering of organizations is a pattern seen across most Asian countries where women are viewed as less competent by their male peers.

3.2.3 | Organizational/political barriers

Politicization of public service remains rampant in most South Asian countries where bureaucrats have low autonomy and experience high interference from politicians (Dasandi & Esteve, 2017). Women officers report challenges dealing with politicians, and "refusal to succumb to the wishes of the political bosses often results in frequent transfers of the civil servants" (Singh, 2018, p. 186). Other organizational barriers include lack of support for career advancement. A survey of women in the Bangladesh Civil Service revealed that biased performance appraisal systems, disparate treatment by male colleagues, sexual harassment, and lack of grievance channels contribute to glass ceilings (Sultan & Jahan, 2016; Zafarullah, 2000). Similarly, in Indonesia and Pakistan, the workplace is masculinized, and women who rise to senior ranking roles conform to gendered organizational norms, thus preserving the so-called gender-neutral bureaucracy (Tanwir, 2014). Confucian cultures (China, Japan, and South Korea) similarly, have well defined gender roles extolling caretaking responsibilities (Choi & Park, 2014), thus perpetuating male-dominated bureaucracies. Percentages of women in senior ranking civil service positions are low in East Asian nations: Korea (5.5%), China (12.6%), and Japan (4.9%) (Global Government Forum, 2021).

3.3 | Ways forward

To foster DEI, fairness should not compete with efficiency, accountability, and performance but work together. Civil service systems must challenge exclusivity and find ways to integrate women throughout government. The dearth of women in senior ranking positions must be addressed holistically through examining extant structural, cultural, political, systemic, perception and attitudinal biases. Although affirmative action policies/quotas are contested in the West and while their efficacy can be questioned, they have helped foster greater DEI (Ansari, 2018). Creating fair entry points, breaking glass ceilings, and fostering empowerment are all essential strategies. If governments do not address gender DEI, it will remain a nervous area of the government (Gooden, 2020) with long-term implications for good governance.

4 | VIGNETTE 3: DEI IN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT

Australia is large in land mass but relatively small (and yet increasingly racially diverse) in population. The acronym "DEI" may not be particularly familiar to Antipodean public administration scholars, although the concepts of

diversity, equity and inclusion are familiar individually, and many Australian researchers write on these topics. Australian public administration has been increasingly focusing in recent years on topics such as gender equality (Carey et al., 2018); violence against women (Kuskoff, 2021); disability policy (Kayess et al., 2014); health equity (Littleton et al., 2021); the need for the diversity of the public service workforce to reflect the diversity of the population (Opare-Addo & Bertone, 2021); and many other topics relevant to DEI. Australian academics won the 2021 IRSPM Rosemary O'Leary Prize for Scholarship on Women and Public Administration, for work on resistance to gender equality in public services (Colley et al., 2021). A theme of growing importance in Australian public administration is redressing inequality in services and outcomes for First Nations people. This involves supporting autonomy and self-determination for these communities, for example through adopting a First Nations Voice to Parliament, and drawing on Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Althaus, 2020; Quiggin, 2018).

An ongoing DEI scandal that has garnered significant recent media attention concerns gender inequality, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in Australia's most prominent democratic institution—the Commonwealth Parliament. In February 2021, former junior ministerial staffer Brittany Higgins alleged that a senior staffer had raped her in a Minister's office 2 years earlier. Outrage over the incident itself and the response of Higgins' employers and the Prime Minister's office brought to light many similar stories:

> Higgins' courage in speaking out inspired revelations by other women MPs and staffers and demonstrations by some 100,000 women and men around Australia, bringing the issue firmly onto the policy agenda (Sawer, 2021, p. 9).

Higgins and other commentators—including 2021 Australian of the Year Grace Tame, a sexual assault survivor and advocate—strongly criticized the government's handling of the allegations. In a prime example of the wife/sister/daughter trope (in which men are urged to treat women like people by imagining them as female relatives), the Prime Minister referred to his wife and daughter in explaining how he came to realize the seriousness of the allegations. Higgins' former boss, a Cabinet Minister, referred to Higgins as a "lying cow" in front of her office staff. These incidents fanned the public outrage (Heurich and Coghlan, 2021). Around the same time, a historical sexual assault allegation surfaced against a senior Minister, unable to be prosecuted because the alleged victim took her own life in 2020. The Minister strongly denied the allegations, but this incident added to the anger about a perceived culture of harassment and misogyny in the federal Parliament.

The notion that federal Parliament was a hostile environment for women had been simmering for many years, with the Liberal Party's "woman problem" the subject of much discussion (the Liberal Party is part of the ruling Liberal National coalition). This related to both the low numbers of women in its parliamentary representation, and its behavior toward women (Heurich and Coghlan, 2021). The current Australian political leadership climate has been argued to favor male political aspirants, as conservative men dominate Australia's contemporary governing parties, and male voters appear to prefer male candidates in intra-party contests between right-wing candidates (Kang et al., 2021). Prior to the current parliamentary scandals, the sexist treatment of Australia's first female Prime Minister Julia Gillard (representing the center-left Labor Party) and Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young had also come under scrutiny (Sawer, 2021). Indeed, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation documentary series *Ms Represented* (screening July 2021) revealed that women from all political parties had experienced negative gendered behaviors in the course of their work (Crabb, 2021). Research has shown that women are often selected for political leadership positions during situations of crisis or precarity (termed the "glass cliff") (Kulich and Ryan, 2017), and that men in Australia and elsewhere are disproportionately preselected for safe seats (Martinez i Coma & McDonnell, 2021).

After Higgins' allegations came to light, the government initially planned to resolve issues of workplace culture internally and through advice from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, as public outcry and political pressure continued—and more allegations against the same political staffer emerged—in March 2021, the government announced that it had engaged Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins to lead a review into parliamentary workplace culture (Murphy, 2021a). As Stark and Yates (2021, p. 350) observe, "public

inquiries are often imposed upon executives who convene them reluctantly". Although this move was cautiously welcomed by those advocating for change, there was also skepticism, as the same government had taken over a year to respond to the 2020 *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* (also conducted by Jenkins and her team at the Australian Human Rights Commission). Moreover, the government had only accepted 40 out of 55 recommendations, agreeing "in principle" or "noting" some of the inquiry's most significant structural recommendations (Nawaz, 2021; Ziwika, 2021). The objective of the new Jenkins Review was "systemic change," and thus, it was not an investigative inquiry tasked with making findings about individuals or particular incidents (Murphy, 2021a).

The review opened in May 2021 and reported in late November. All current or previous Commonwealth parliamentary workers were invited to contribute. Of the 1723 who participated, approximately two-third were female. About half were current or former political staffers, one-tenth were current or former politicians, and a further two-fifths were other parliamentary workers such as public servants (Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2021). This reinforces the notion that the gendered nature of the parliamentary workplace is a public service as well as a political issue. Bullying (experienced by slightly more women than men) and sexual harassment (experienced significantly more by women) were revealed as pervasive (AHRC, 2021). Jenkins reported that sexual harassment and assault were so pervasive in Parliament that "[w]omen we spoke to told us they felt 'lucky' when they had not directly experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault" (Jenkins, 2021).

Sawer (2021) argued that for female staffers in particular, the precarious and hierarchical nature of the employment, high pressure, long hours, an expectation of alcohol-fuelled after-hours networking, and an expectation of party loyalty have created a culture ripe for gendered bullying and harassment. Thus sexism and misogyny are not solely responsible for the problem; gendered material inequality also contributes to what Sawer (2021) termed a "toxic parliament." The Jenkins Review agreed: it identified power imbalances and gender inequality as drivers of misconduct in parliamentary workplaces, and recommended developing policies to address the misuse of alcohol. Recommendations centered around five areas: improvements to leadership; diversity, equality and inclusion; performance; accountability; and safety and wellbeing. New Codes of Conduct for parliamentarians and staffers would bring Australia into line with comparable jurisdictions such as Canada and the UK (AHRC, 2021).

Viewing this vignette through the lens of Gooden's (2014) *name*, *blame*, and *claim* framework introduced earlier, it is clear that whistleblowers such as Higgins and activists such as Tame were among the most prominent to *name* the problem in its most recent instantiation, although activists and commentators have been pointing out gendered issues within Australian parliaments for many years. In response, government ministers were forced to admit that a problem existed, although as described the government's immediate response and the degree to which they were willing to take responsibility attracted much criticism. This goes to the second part of the framework, *blaming* (understanding the causes and effects of the problem as well as who or what is responsible). Although the Jenkins Review into parliamentary workplace culture assisted with uncovering the causes and effects of the "toxic parliament," its terms of reference were clear that no particular individuals were to be investigated or blamed for their conduct.

As regards *claiming*—taking active steps to resolve injustices—the Jenkins Review is a positive move in this direction, although the Government's past responses to similar inquiries have not been considered satisfactory by gender equality advocates. Perhaps hoping to avoid the fate of her earlier Respect@Work report, Jenkins emphasized in her launch speech that the 28 recommendations were a mutually reinforcing "package" and should not be "cherry picked" for implementation (Jenkins, 2021). The government's December mid-year economic and fiscal outlook allocated $17.8 m over 4 years to fund their implementation, with the responsible Minister reporting that the government intended to "take action" on all 28 (Murphy, 2021b). Although the most significant structural changes were to be delayed until after the 2022 election, he anticipated that a Statement of Acknowledgement by party leaders and the heads of the parliamentary departments acknowledging "the harm caused by bullying, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces and a commitment to action and shared accountability" would be delivered soon after Parliament returned (Murphy, 2021b). Therefore, it seems likely that there will be at least rhetorical and symbolic *claiming* of the problem of toxic parliamentary workplaces, shared between all political parties. How much structural and systemic change will follow remains to be seen.

5 | VIGNETTE 4: HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEI: A COLOMBIAN CASE STUDY

Despite being a multicultural country since colonial times, Colombia's recognition of its diversity is a work in progress. Such recognition emerged as a subproduct of a "Constitutional Laboratory" taking place in Latin America in the 1980s whereby constitutional reform allowed the "creation of democratic and pluralistic societies that respect the difference and recognize a broad range of individual and collective rights" (Laurent, 2018, p. 1). The normative recognition of Colombia's multiculturality began with the 1991 Constitution (Gutiérrez Quevedo, 2004). Not without struggle, the realization of a diverse, multicultural country provided a platform where formerly ignored and rather oppressed identities were finally more fully recognized (Cuchumbé Holguín, 2012).

A historically diverse country, such as it is the region in general, Colombia had to wait almost 200 years to defy what Wade calls "The Myth of the Mestizo Nation" fed by the institutionalized idea among white criollos elites of a whitened, exclusive nation that effectively constrained participation of blacks and indigenous individuals, categorizing them as inferiors (Cuchumbé Holguín, 2012). Exclusion was based on imaginarily locating Afro Colombian and Indigenous communities as "beyond the limits of a legitimate nationality, as non-nationals, distant of the basic values that imply being white or mestizo (light skinned), urban, civilized, and with a formal education" (Wade, 2000, p. 103). *Whitening* became an ideology and social practice to establish a "Colombian hierarchical social order" (Wade, 2000, p. 103). Although recognizing diversity remains a valid starting point to foster DEI in policy, law, and management, stagnation occurs whether through violence perpetrated against historically marginalized communities (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009) or through government not remedying inequities faced by such communities (Salazar, 2013, p. 106). Thus, this vignette examines higher education and civil society organizational (CSO) collaboration as a suitable path to break Colombian lethargy in the pursuit of DEI and particularly focuses on Universidad Icesi in Cali as a case study.

5.1 | Citizenship participation and affirmative actions

The drafting and passage of the 1991 Colombian Constitution was a juridical and cultural twist (Cuchumbé Holguín, 2012), "the fruit of a strong citizen participation and the incorporation of ethnic, religious, gender and political minorities into the public debate" (Laurent, 2018, p. 5). The dynamics surrounding the passage and subsequent events and policies led to greater chances of historically marginalized groups—women, LGBTQ+ individuals, Afro Colombian and Indigenous communities—to address, discuss, and have remedied pervasive discrimination, violence, vectors of exclusion, and racism (Eagan, 2006; Laurent, 2018; Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009; Salazar, 2013; Sánchez Botero, 2005). Most of these tools are Constitutional Court rulings (Sánchez Botero, 2005), public policy master documents, such as the CONPES document #3310 for the betterment of the living conditions of the Afro Colombian population (Mosquera Rosero-Labbé & León Díaz, 2009), while others enforce the implementation of affirmative actions as means of committing national and local governments to action (Moreno Parra, 2010). Affirmative actions have been implemented concerning government procurement, hiring, contracting, promoting effective participation of women (Durango Álvarez, 2016; Gómez-Hernández, 2018; Vallejo Molina, 2017), recognizing and protecting ethnic and racial diversity (Restrepo, 2013; Laurent, 2018), and promoting gender and LGBTQ+ equity (Cotrina Gulfo, 2017; Durango Álvarez, 2016). Still, the 1991 Constitution and Court decisions have been deemed as insufficient to subvert violence, racism, and discrimination within Colombian society, especially for indigenous and Afro-descendant populations (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009; Mato, 2017).

5.2 | Affirmative actions in higher education

Universities are critical to addressing inequality and violence in Latin-American social structures, yet such institutions "are rigidly monocultural institutions, whose training programs do not include the knowledge, languages,

world visions, proposals of futures, and ways of learning and knowledge production of those peoples" (Mato, 2017, p. 11).

Affirmative actions for the inclusion of diverse and multicultural students in higher education in Colombia are characterized by "special slots aimed at ethnic groups in universities [that] were created for indigenous groups. Lately, Black, Afro Colombian, raizales, and palenquera communities in rural and urban contexts were included. Such inclusion has been developed mainly in public universities, through a few slots for applicants from such communities" (Ocoró Loango & Da Silva, 2017, p. 138). Furthermore, such actions occur in three main categories: preferential admission programs, economic support, and intercultural universities (Quijada, 2021).

Concerning indigenous and Afro Colombian students, effects can be limited in that there is a "gradual increase of the enrollment of ethnic and racially diverse students; the limited offer of posts; scholarships and college loans that barely cover for general expenses, and intercultural universities with insufficient funds to address remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic" (Quijada, 2021, p. 135). In general, the scope of affirmative actions in higher education is "incipient and limited" (Ocoró Loango & Da Silva, 2017, p. 132), whereby inequities, discrimination, racism, and lack of access continue despite DEI policies (Ocoró Loango & Da Silva, 2017, p. 142).

5.3 | Higher education institutions, CSOs collaboration and DEI progress: A case study

Most affirmative actions in Colombian higher education occur in public universities (Ocoró Loango & Da Silva, 2017), but some private universities have endeavored to promote DEI albeit with mixed results (León & Holguín, 2004), which Ocoró Loango and Da Silva call "difficulties of origin" (2017, p. 142) as a result of poor-quality previous education, an issue poorly addressed in universities (León & Holguín, 2004). However, higher education and CSO collaboration can be suitable paths to promote DEI in Colombia (Ocoró Loango & Da Silva, 2017; Van Wessel et al., 2021). Universidad Icesi in Cali serves as the case study.

Universidad Icesi is a private nonprofit university founded in 1979 by business leaders from the Valle del Cauca state. It is a benchmark of synergistic collaboration between the private sector and academia. A key center at this university is the Afrodiasporic Studies Center, which promotes innovation, research, education, and public intervention in issues related to the histories and cultures of the global African diaspora. As a think-do-tank that implements social intervention, the center has a long-lasting relationship with what Van Wessel et al. call "Northern CSOs," "that have direct access to substantial, mostly Northern-based funding and commonly act as '*fundermediaries*', distributing funding to other CSOs, (many of which located in the geographical South) and steering much of their work" (2021, p. 718). Part of such *steering* pertains to comply with DEI engagement, acknowledging that "building an organizational culture around DEI is an ongoing process" (Ford Foundation Funder Guidance for Engaging Grantees on DEI: 3). Requesting data has become one of the most important tools to follow DEI progress within the University over the years.

In this way, Universidad Icesi was sought to make DEI cornerstones of all its practices, such as through incorporating numerous policies meant to name, blame, and claim barriers, discrimination, harassment, and exclusion, while promoting respectful, fair treatment, friendly communication, and equal access. An institutional guidance mechanism and attention route for gender-based violence was implemented to process cases of gender violence that may affect students, teachers, and collaborators. Furthermore, the university designed a policy of opportunities, scholarships, and financial aid to promote, encourage, and facilitate the enrollment and permanence in higher education of outstanding students with limited economic resources, and from various ethnic communities.

5.4 | Assessing progress

Data reveal significant progress in the inclusion of students belonging to the more vulnerable socio-economic strata (strata 1 and 2) in the last 15 years. As context, for Figures 1 and 3, data refer to the academic year as well as the

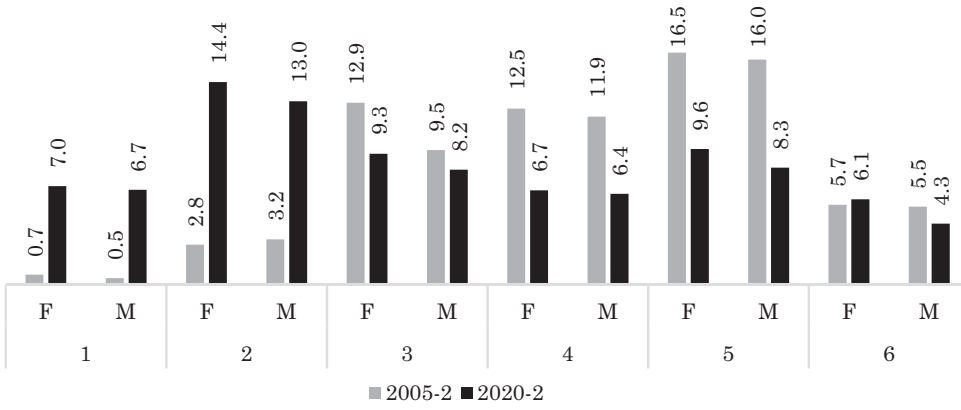

FIGURE 1 Evolution of historical-comparative enrollment 15 years according to stratum and gender 2005-2 and 2020-2 (percentages). *Source*: Universidad Icesi. Databases

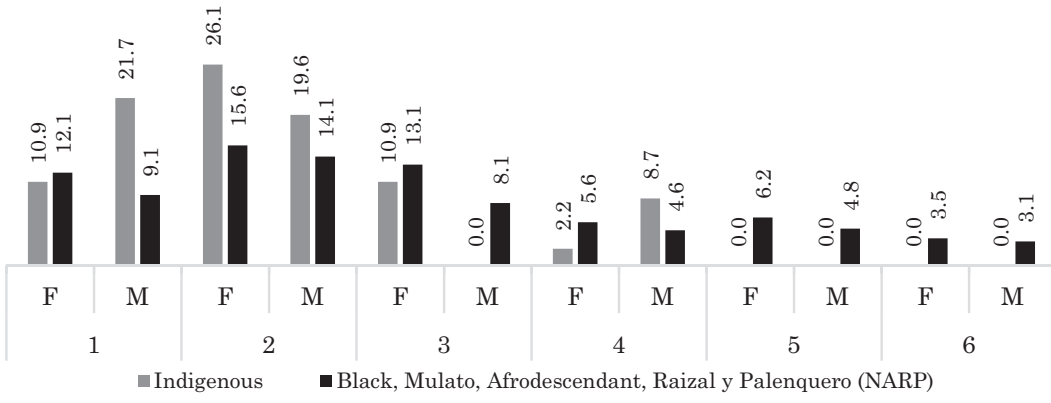

FIGURE 2 Distribution of indigenous students and NARP according to stratum and gender. 2020-2 (percentages). *Source*: Universidad Icesi. Databases

semester. For instance, 2005-2 refers to the second semester of 2005 whereas 2020-1 refers to the first semester of 2020, and so forth. First, percentages of women from stratum 1 compared to the general total of those enrolled has increased 10 times in the last 15 years.

Second, the analysis for the second semester of 2020 revealed that 10.6% of the students at the University are black, mulatto, Afro-descendant, raizales, and palenqueros (NARP)[1], 43% of the students enrolled identified as mestizos, 38% as white, 1% as indigenous, and 0.04% as Rom or Gypsy.

An intersectional analysis showed that the highest proportion of indigenous students are women from stratum 2 (26.1% of total participation) (Figure 2). Men from stratum 2 represent 21.7% of the total number of indigenous

[1]Please note that "NARP" is a governmental and institutional acronym, especially evident in the work of the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Department of Statistics) and in numerous other reports. The acronym is the institutionalized fashion in which the national government addresses Colombian individuals of African descent. Debates continue on the use and appropriateness of the terms used, but the terms are used institutionally to refer to: Negro/a (Black); Mulatto, Afrocolombiano/a (Afrocolombian); Raizal (individuals of Afro-Anglo descent who mostly inhabit the Islands of San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina); and Palenqueros/as (residents of San Basilio de Palenque, a self-freed community that scaped slavery and settled in a zone nearby Cartagena).

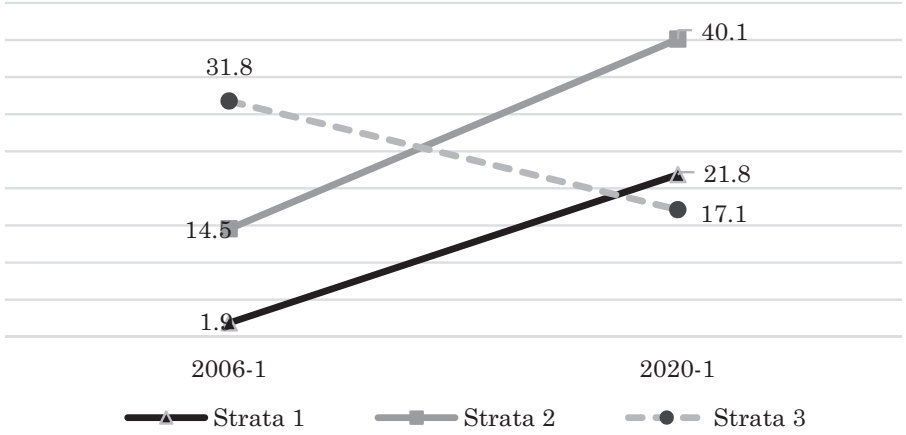

FIGURE 3 The proportion of scholarships awarded to undergraduate students' strata 1, 2, and 3. Historical comparison 14 years 2006-1 and 2020-1 (percentages). *Source*: Universidad Icesi. Databases

students. Analysis by ethnic-racial group, stratum, and gender revealed that indigenous students enrolled in the university belong to strata 1 to 4. No indigenous students from strata 5 and 6 are registered.

On the other hand, the records of NARP students show that while they had representation in all socioeconomic strata, there was a higher proportion in strata 2 and 3. Women's percentage of participation exceeds men in all socioeconomic strata. The highest percentage of NARP students are women belonging to stratum 2 with 15.6% of the total participation (Figure 2). Furthermore, data show that the highest proportion of white students were men and women belonging to stratum 5. For mestizo students, the highest proportion of students comes from stratum 2.

Third, the data over the past 14 years reveal progress in DEI in proportions of awarded scholarships. Between 2006 and 2020, the percentage of scholarships awarded to students belonging to strata 1, 2, and 3 increased from 49.6% to 79% (Figure 3). The largest increment in scholarships awarded occurred in stratum 1. In addition, in 2020-1, the highest proportion of scholarships were awarded to women. Additionally, when analyzing the distribution of scholarships under an intersectional approach, it is observed that 40% of the women scholarship recipients are mestizas, 24.7% white, and 11.1% NARP. Of the men awarded scholarships, 39.9% are mestizos, 28% whites, and 10.1% NARP.

Thus, this case helps suggest a path to foster DEI in Colombia. The hypothesis is supported in that complementarities in CSO collaborations can foster DEI within universities and their units that collaborate and receive funding from international CSOs.

6 | VIGNETTE 5: DEI AND LIBERATION

By attending to social equity and oppression, scholars can begin to reposition the field as one that asks big questions about state authority, legitimacy, human rights and dignity (see Roberts, 2018). This type of scholarship necessitates a historical consciousness that stands in opposition to amnesia and myopia by rejecting the notion of oppression ex nihilo and unmasking oppression. Such a liberatory agenda is tantamount to remembering and bearing witness to suffering, which should inform future administrative practices and forgiveness, repentance, reparations, and healing efforts. At the same time, this can help the field as it ventures to make sense of the business of government in perpetual crisis (Farrell et al., 2021). Apropos, this vignette examines social equity and oppression in the context of Chile's 2019 *estadillo social* [social outburst] and the use of administrative evil as a case study with implications for other Latin American countries.

6.1 | Social outburst and administrative evil

On October 4, 2019, the panel responsible for setting the fare of the Metropolitan Public Transport Network in Santiago, Chile, decided to increase the toll by 30 pesos. Upon implementation, postsecondary students moved to evade metro turnstiles and stage protests (Palacios-Valladares, 2020). In response, the government attempted to delegitimize them by framing the demonstrations as solely violent and mobilized *Carabineros* [national law enforcement] to establish order (Muñoz et al., 2021, pp. 131–135). On October 18, the government invoked *Ley de Seguridad del Estado* (LSE) to give *Carabineros* the power to enforce stricter punishments for crimes against social order. Over the next 2 days, President Sebastián Piñera declared a state of exception, deployed the military, and proclaimed "*estamos en guerra contra un enemigo poderoso* [we are at war against a powerful enemy]" (Mayol, 2020; Navarro & Tromben, 2019). Under the auspices of LSE and the state of exception, authorities began to not only target individuals engaged in violent or criminal acts (some groups attacked police with rocks, looted, and burned public and private property) but also peaceful demonstrators and bystanders (Bonnefoy, 2019). Reports indicate that Chilean authorities carried out egregious acts of administrative evil—that is, public acts of evil or wrongdoing, ranging from white lies to genocide (Balfour et al., 2020)—including arbitrary or unlawful killings, torture, violence against members of the LGBTQI+ community, sexual abuse or assault, and violence against indigenous persons (Amnesty International, 2021; Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2019). The conditions that precipitated the *estadillo social* in Chile (e.g., income inequality and repression) have also fueled recent protests in Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, and Paraguay (Daniels, 2021; Murillo, 2021). As another stressor, COVID-19 has put governments under immense pressure and exacerbated persistent inequalities throughout the region (Daniels, 2021).

Not attending to social equity leads to unrest and instability (Guy & McCandless, 2012). Moreover, in the absence of social equity, *otherness* prospers insofar as life becomes fundamentally typified by advantages and disadvantages based on a person's proximity to the status quo (Santis, 2021, p. 2). Without attending to social equity, *othering* can engulf the public sector, resulting in "detrimental harms for subjugated and marginalized communities" (Blessett et al., 2019, p. 284). As more people mobilize to speak out against oppression, public officials and administrators will have to make critical decisions about how to best respond to these moments of crisis.

6.2 | Memories of the state of exception

During crises, administrators and leaders often need to suspend standard operating procedures to return to a state of predictability. However, as Agamben (1995/1998; 2003/2005) points out, the state of exception can give rise to zones of legal violence outside of the law (since it suspends and supplants established rules) that claim to maintain the law in its very suspension (see Ávila, 2013). These state-sanctioned spaces without law are the condition of possibility for the extermination of life, as in Nazi concentration camps. In short, public actors may use crises and the state of exception to facilitate acts of administrative evil without accountability or regard for life (Santis, 2020). As noted, reports indicate that Chilean government actors carried out a litany of abuses under the state of exception—the same has recently occurred in Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti, and Bolivia (Muñoz, 2020). The sheer possibility of a long-lasting state of exception that promotes administrative evil is one reason why the field must pay attention to social equity as a north star for administrative practices and reforms.

Attending social equity and oppression demands a rejection of amnesia, myopia, and evil. Apropos, Cubillos Vega (2020) argues that it is difficult to comprehend the 2019 *estadillo social* in Chile without acknowledging the impact of Augusto Pinochet. Throughout the demonstrations in Chile, one of the most oft-heard slogans was "*¡No son 30 pesos, son 30 años!* [It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years]." The demonstrators did not limit their grievances to the fare increase. Instead, demonstrators stressed their frustration with three decades of unequal progress connected to neoliberal economic policies, and a hollow state, founded by Pinochet's totalitarian regime with support from the United States (Cuadra, 2020; Mayol, 2020; McSherry, 2019; Morán Faúndes, 2019). Between 1973 and 1990,

Pinochet's regime operated more than 1000 clandestine sites of administrative evil where more than 30,000 people were detained, tortured (physically and mentally), sexually abused, and at least 1000 were disappeared (Hourcade et al., 2018). Yet, neoliberal thinkers like Milton Friedman and F. A. Hayek considered Pinochet's coup a necessary evil toward *economic* freedom (see Farrant et al., 2012).

Throughout the 1970s–1990s, administrative evil in state-sanctioned spaces without law did not stay in Chile. During this period of time of the Cold War, the US backed a series of military coups (including Pinochet's) to prevent "another Cuba," obliterate leftists forces, and extirpate leftists ideas (McSherry, 2005). To back these military coups, the US promoted the sharing of tactics and intelligence and provided training, as in the School of the Americas (Zanchetta, 2016, p. 1088). These intelligence relations later facilitated the creation and operational effectiveness of Operation Condor (McSherry, 2005; Zanchetta, 2016).

Condor was a secret information sharing network between military regimes in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil, later joined by Ecuador and Peru, that engaged in the abduction, torture, and execution of political opponents (McSherry, 2005). As McSherry (2005) argues, Condor was a hidden apparatus of terror and social control of the military states that used the state of exception for extreme violence with total impunity. Today, amid protests and movements against oppression, the legacies (and mentalities) of the military coups, Operation Condor, and American neocolonialism are very much alive; reminding people that "administrative agencies are central not only to the good that government can do but also to the horrors in can produce" (Balfour et al., 2020, p. 161). The big challenge in Latin America, and elsewhere, is to build agencies wherein public actors find a "sense of purpose rooted in an inclusive community that both empowers and restrains them" and offers "pride in sustaining a tradition of service while able to question the status quo and renew the agency by learning and developing in dialogue with the community" (Balfour et al., 2020, p. 161). Although there is no guarantee that all instances of evil can be curtailed, promoting administrative ethics that attend to social equity and the embodied experience of oppression offers the best path forward.

7 | "CLAIMING" DEI

We return to the question guiding this piece: *What is currently known about DEI in public administration, especially the causes and effects of inequities and what public administration institutions can do to address those inequities?* Across these vignettes–which are not comprehensive of all of the DEI issues facing the field and the world–it is evident that numerous, prominent inequities can be named: racism, sexism, cis-gender normativity, white supremacy, and many forms of intersectional prejudice. Still, there has been progress toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many countries have passed laws outlawing hate crimes, expanding enfranchisement, offering more expansive protections for historically marginalized populations, and creating more representative bureaucracies and policymaking bodies. Yet other dimensions showcase policies keeping the status quo in place. These include the promulgation of formally limiting or forbidding the participation of certain populations or, even more subtly, informal policies and dynamics, especially within agencies, that create hostile, unsupportive, and marginalizing work environments (Gooden, 2020).

Each area of the world differs somewhat in terms of how governments conceive of DEI, yet governments have commonly marginalized populations based upon prejudice against race, color, ethnicity, and many intersections therein, especially intersections between race and gender identity, race and religion, and race and geographic origin (Ahlberg et al., 2019; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Christian, 2019). These policies and administrative actions have resulted in treating populations as "deviant," resulting in the perpetuation and extension of inequities (Gaynor, 2018; Ingram et al., 2007). Despite claims of administrative neutrality, perhaps best regarded as a myth (Portillo et al., 2019), social structures distribute power differentially to people depending on where they sit at the interstices of power structures, in that structures combine to affect people's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991).

Taken broadly, questions of fairness in the field have long been rooted not only in the empirical study of these issues but, obviously, the normative position that promoting equity is ideal, that historically marginalized identities are *worthy* (Wooldridge & Gooden, 2009). Still, the field must be cautious about unproductive cycles of "ready, aim, study more" and pay attention to the "fire" of research, namely using research to promote substantive policy and administrative systems known to be effective in reducing racial inequities in particular (Gooden, 2008, p. 7). Such examinations must be global and are all the more pressing given inequities evident in the COVID-19 global pandemic (United Nations, 2021a).

Given the importance of these dimensions—including the imperative to name, blame, and claim bias, prejudice, and discrimination (Gooden, 2014)—Svara and Brunet (2020) comment that social equity helps prevent a hollow public administration. Thus, the work of DEI will always be inherently normative, operating from a key position that historically marginalized groups are *worthy*, not deviant, and that public service has the moral obligation to promote services to improve their lives. Furthermore, as shown throughout this piece, numerous public and nonprofit administrators across the world have indicated that promoting DEI and collectively ascertaining what it means in practice, while difficult, is much more preferable than the alternative, namely the continuation and expansion of oppressive systems with little action to dismantle and replace such systems.

Thus, a key reflection on these patterns is that conceptions of the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion are socially constructed and that different societies across the journal's 100-year history have come to different answers about the meaning of these terms. Still, theorists from numerous traditions have advised caution, especially those operating within traditions like critical race theory; various waves of feminism, especially third and fourth wave feminism, indigenous feminism, and black feminism; intersectionality theory; postcolonialism; and queer theory (Collins, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991; Hamad, 2020; Zamudio et al., 2011). Taken as a whole, such theorists note how societal dynamics, and therefore also government and nonprofit dynamics, occur within and through structured systems of power. Thus, to these theorists, both the inputs and outputs of public service agencies are functions of the power dynamics within those agencies, especially: what fairness means; who "deserves" fairness; whether distinctions in access, processes, quality, and outcomes are desirable distinctions or are caused by bias, prejudice, and discrimination; who is at the table, and what roles do they play. In short, who defines whether something is or is not a problem and how they define it sets the stage for *if* public service agencies will address those problems and also *how* they will address those issues (see Stone, 2011).

Several strategies to *claim* inequities are evident. These strategies broadly fall in line with general strategies recommended by social equity scholars and practitioners for decades, namely that *claiming* occurs through a combination of agencies admitting issues, prioritizing fairness, being more diverse, reaching out to historically marginalized populations, and guaranteeing seats at the table (Gooden, 2014, 2020; Johnson & Svara, 2015; Riccucci, 2021). As shown throughout this piece, strategies are evident from across the world, whether through instituting recruitment drives to diversify public service, changing HR policies to promote more inclusive work environments, or making the measurement of fairness and being accountable for achieving progress toward fairness key dimensions of public service agencies' work (An & Song, 2021; Riccucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). Given the global nature of these inequities, whether before or during the present pandemic, it is incumbent to remember that public administration must not only *name* and *blame* inequities, but also *claim* them, or take active, diverse, inclusive, and meaningful actions to remedy inequities and promote fairer systems (Gooden, 2014). These questions will endure. It will be essential for practitioners and scholars to continue to investigate these questions, especially to ascertain not only the causes and effects of inequities but also how best to remedy those inequities, including the normative priority to ensure that even the discussion over how best to engage in public service is itself diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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