

West Chester University

Digital Commons @ West Chester University

Sustainability Research & Practice Seminar
Presentations

Sustainability Research & Creative Activities @
WCU

10-27-2021

Sustaining Diversity in Higher Education: The Importance of Investigating Success

Lisa C. Huebner

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, lhuebner@wcupa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/srca_sp



Part of the [Gender Equity in Education Commons](#), and the [Sustainability Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Huebner, L. C. (2021). Sustaining Diversity in Higher Education: The Importance of Investigating Success. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/srca_sp/50

This Seminar Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Sustainability Research & Creative Activities @ WCU at Digital Commons @ West Chester University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sustainability Research & Practice Seminar Presentations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ West Chester University. For more information, please contact wcrestler@wcupa.edu.

Sustaining Diversity in Higher Education: The Importance of Investigating Success

Dr. Lisa C. Huebner

Professor, Department of Women's and Gender Studies

Research Team:

Caelan Brown

Samantha Jeune

Odette Kolenky

Christa Rivers

This presentation is dedicated to our research participants: self-identified women of color undergraduates. We see your success. We see the burdens imposed upon you. We see your strength, endurance, and resilience. But most of all, we thank you for your time. We thank you for your insights. And we thank you for all your energies every single day.

I have received permission from my research assistants to use their names to credit them for their intellectual contributions. All other names are changed.

Commitment to DEI



LAUNCHING FALL 2020
INSTITUTE FOR
CULTURAL COMPETENCE &
INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
Open to all students, faculty & staff



**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER
EVERYDAY!**

Promises of Diversity

The website lied because it is totally different from what I saw.

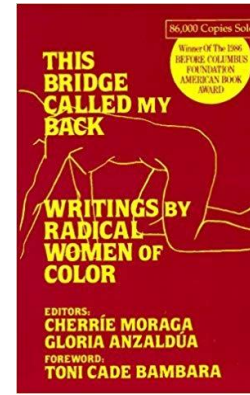
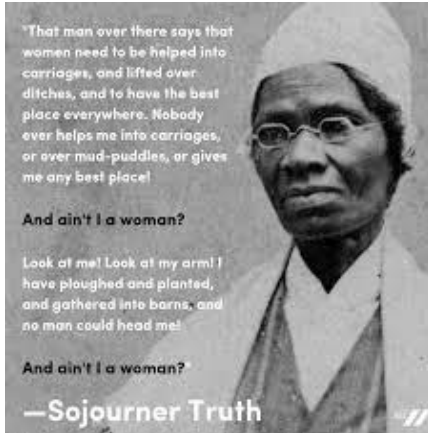
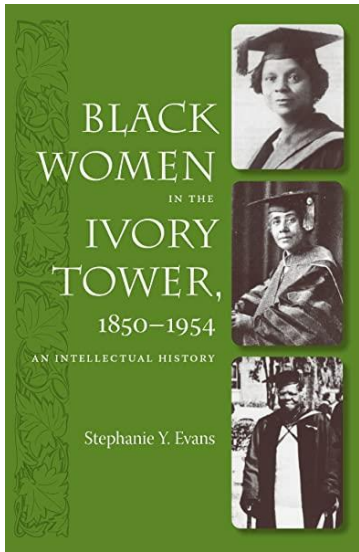
The claim to be diverse is frustrating because it is not diverse.

They have multicultural organizations, but all those organizations don't really get funding at all so to keep it going, it's kind of like their own passion. Then coming here and doing tours and stuff, statues in the middle of campus and it's like wow this school is actually big on diversity and making people feel included but it's kind of like a token more than anything.

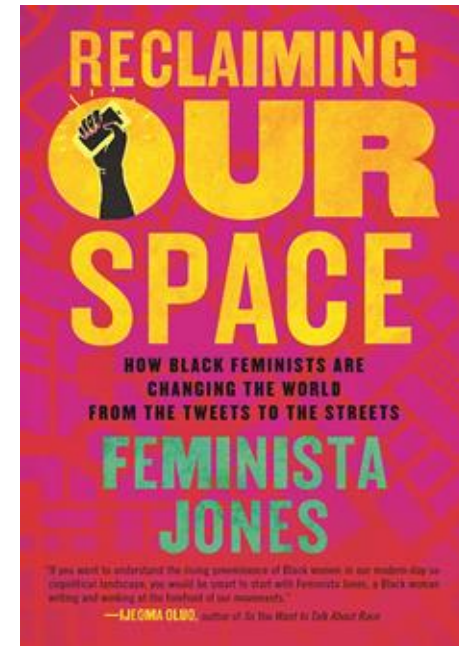
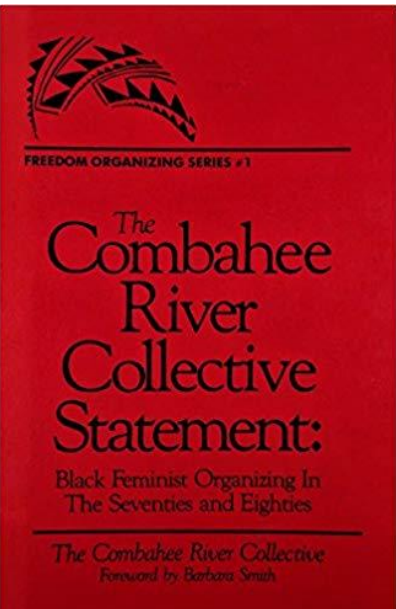
The websites make an effort to highlight people of color but when you get here it is a lot of faculty and staff of color (except for food service) You never really see that many individuals of color outside of those roles. We are not as diverse as they make it seem.

They had it on the front page, we are building up equity, something else in diversity, I laughed so hard. Diversity, where?

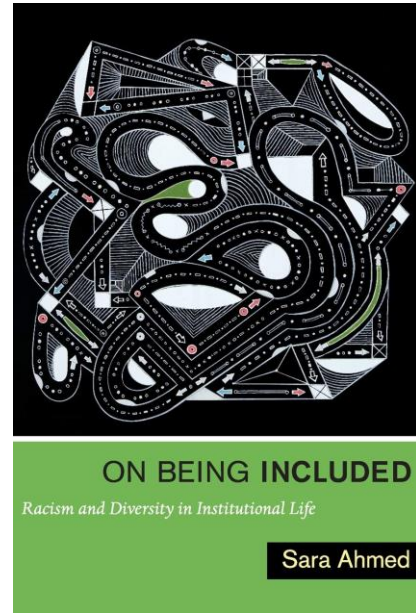
Critical Race Feminism



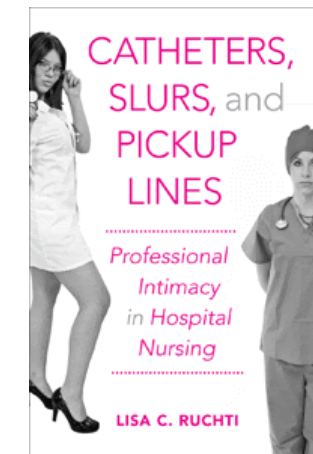
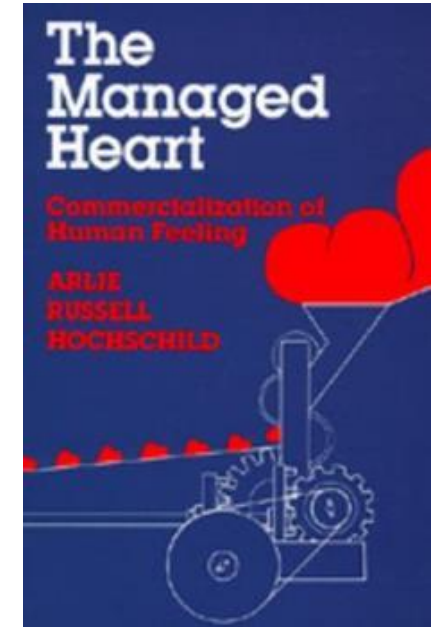
IDA B. WELLS
CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST | 1862-1931



Neoliberalism in Higher Education



Commodification of Body Emotional Labor



HOW DO WE MEASURE “SUCCESS”?

QUESTION:

What “invisible” barriers do women of color face while thriving on a campus that excludes them?

METHOD:

- An ethnographic case study of one regional, state-funded public university (PWI) 2014-2017 and informed by intersectionality theory, black feminist theory, and critical race theory
- Participant observation of campus events dedicated to race, gender, or both (2014-2017);
- In-depth semi-structured interviews with women of color undergraduate students (N=55);
- Content analysis of university promotion and recruitment materials;
- Inductive thematic analysis using Dedoose software which includes systematic coding of all observation notes, interview audio files and transcriptions, and content images.

West Chester
University of Pennsylvania

EQUITY SCORECARD

Closing the Achievement Gap
for First-Year Students

Executive Summary



[1]



The Price of Diversity

Black women are more involved than Black men. We always show up at the men's programs, but they never come to ours.

I know we should reach out to white people, to help make it better.

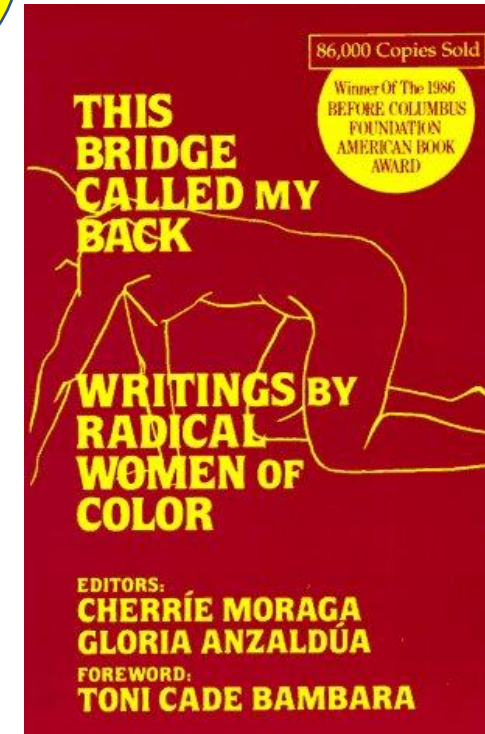
I do have a white friend who likes to bring up that there are so many scholarships for minority students. It's always a difficult conversation because I try explaining to her why so many minority students are targeted, but she is like nah nah nah. And I understand because she comes from a very white high school so she cannot make those connections.

I don't want them to think they can't ask questions.

It gets kind of burdensome having to educate those around you.

Sometimes it makes me nervous to talk about race and gender and I had to do it as an RA. We had a staff of 16 and there were 4 people of color. I was so nervous that I would come off as a crazy Black girl.

I know I need to make it comfortable for white people, so they don't feel called out for not being PC.



The Daily Normal

I don't feel comfortable enough to call [my college campus] home.

There were just a lot of times I felt like I was doubted as a woman of color, especially in the sciences.

But during orientation, I was an orientation leader, it was the first day, and I was handing out candy and I had this professor come to me and I don't know why I thought this was ok, you're a professor, and he comes up to me and he says, I like your hair. And at this time, I had extensions in a weave, long, loose, typical European hair, and I said, thank you. And then he said, 'Where did you get your hair? Oh is it horsehair?' And I'm like, are you kidding me? Did you just say that?

What are you?

Well you are barely Black, you don't look it, you don't act like it.

[School name] is for the white people

An advisor was like it's ok if you graduate a semester late, a lot of people like you graduate a semester late.

Successes and Strategies

I would tell them to carefully research schools about diversity.

I would say choose your battles, but don't let anything limit you because what society is showing you isn't all that you can do.

I would say all of it is community, that there are other women of color experiencing the same things. It does feel good to kind of like – what is it – be around the kitchen table.

I surround myself with people who are like minded with my major.

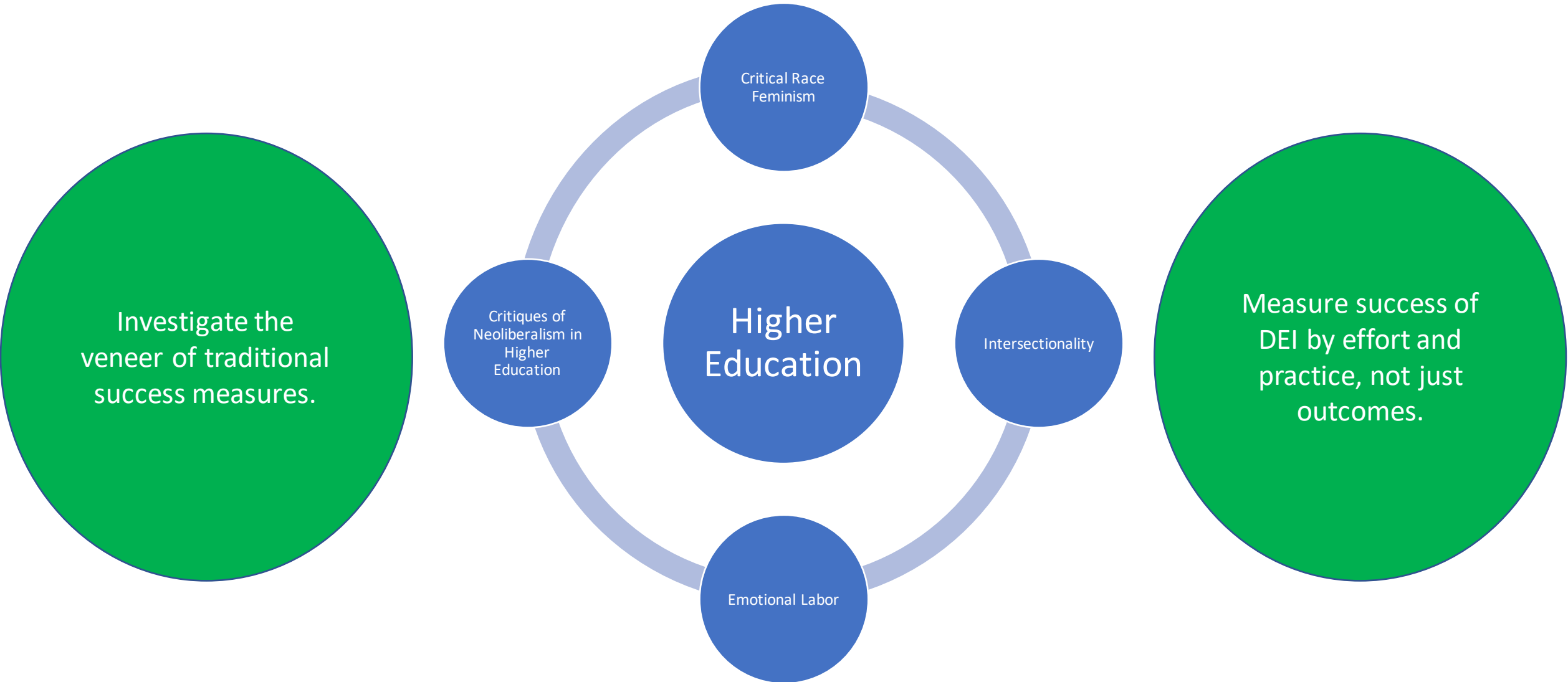
Preserving energy: If it is nonsense it doesn't deserve my energy.

I would say don't be surprised by the comments, but don't take them either.

Recommendations

- ✓ Re-instate a cascade mentorship program just for women of color; should be led by a woman of color.
- ✓ Match mentoring programs by race AND gender and keep these pairs/groups small (2-3 people).
- ✓ Provide safe zones/programs that are specific and available only for women of color.
- ✓ Require white students to learn anti-racism.
- ✓ Create initiatives to hire and retain women of color faculty, staff, and counselors.
- ✓ Most important: Avoid claiming success, DEI programs should be ongoing and consistent.

Conclusions: The Importance of Investigating Success



Investigate the
veneer of traditional
success measures.

Critiques of
Neoliberalism in
Higher
Education

Higher
Education

Emotional Labor

Intersectionality

Measure success of
DEI by effort and
practice, not just
outcomes.