

Leadership Integrity and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Valeria J. Martinez

Vanderbilt University

Abstract

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are often cited as organizational values and/or part of an organization's mission, especially in the education sector. However, there is limited research on the impact leadership integrity has on the perception of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on employees within DEI work. Using phenomenological and ethnographic approaches, this mixed method improvement study sought to understand the relationship of leadership integrity on employees at Ezra University, who work within the online diversity and inclusion certification program. A set of recommendations were provided to address the findings.

Dedication

Para todas las Latinas que luchan por más – más vida, más oportunidades, y más control; para las mujeres a las que se les dijo que no; para las niñas que no se ven en posiciones de poder;

y para nuestros ancestros a quienes nunca se les dio una oportunidad...

Para Mamá, la persona que respira vida en mi espíritu y me levanta ...

Para Mami, who grounds me with faith and resiliency, as only a strong single mother could do ...

Para mi madrina, my role model, my confidant and my safe haven ...

Para mis hermanas, my sisters in life, my posse, my squad, las doctoras – those who provided unconditional love, support, presence, guidance and space for me at my best and my worst ...

Para mis hermanos, my brothers, who never silenced my voice
but gave me the mic so that others would pay attention ...

To my beautiful godchildren and my amazing students who inspire me, motivate me,
and give me reasons to strive for what has not been attainable to us ...

Para nuestra Isla del Encanto, Borinquen, Puerto Rico – for the beauty of our people,
for our endurance and determination, for our strength against all odds ...

For our African and Indigenous brethren, for your displacement and silencing, for your
othering, and for your fight in asserting truth, history, and asserting our lives matter ...

... les dedico esto.

With a population of nearly 30 million, Latinas are vital to the success of this country. Despite systemic inequities in education, health, and the economy limiting our ability to achieve, Latinas contribute nearly \$3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy, but still only earn 55 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men. Exacerbated by COVID-19, 21% of Latinas lost jobs in the early days of the pandemic; nearly a quarter of Latinas do not have access to health insurance. Latinos and Hispanic adults have the lowest college attainment level of the country; in fact, only **0.52%** Latinas have a doctoral degree (U.S. Census Bureau, Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2020) and I am now one of them.

For most of my life, my identity was tied to survival and suffering. Pero ya no. Floreci. Entiendo que hay más que hacer y siempre habrá más, pero que orgullo empezar desde esta posición, esta página, como Doctora.

To all the Brown Girls: la lucha sigue contigo conduciendo el camino because you can.
May you always know your worth.

Blessings and immense gratitude to my community. I wouldn't be me without you.

Dr. Eve Rifkin, my adviser – thank you.

Contents

Area of Inquiry	5
Research Synthesis	7
Leadership Integrity	11
Conceptual Framework	13
ADKAR Model for Change Management	14
Critical Race Theory.....	16
Data Collection & Methodology	17
Analysis	21
Survey Analysis.....	21
Interview Analysis.....	29
Findings and Recommendations	32
Finding #1: Awareness and knowledge of DEI is not collectively understood, resulting in a diverse perception of organizational values.	33
Recommendation #1.....	33
Finding #2: Desire, as defined by ADKAR, to foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive department and professional experience is not reflected by leadership.....	34
Recommendation #2:	35
Finding #3: The absence of a perceived ethic of diversity by leadership has impacted the perception of leadership integrity at Ezra University.	35
Recommendation #3:	36
Recommendation #4:	36
References	38
Appendix A	46
Appendix B	47
Appendix C	48

Area of Inquiry

Ezra University, a predominately white institution, rebranded its online learning platform in January 2020. As a new unit under the academic leadership of the Office of the Provost, its asynchronous certification program helped the new unit become one of the organizations to flourish during the Covid-19 pandemic. In fall 2020, Ezra's Board of Trustees voted to transition the program to a nonprofit under the Office of the Provost (Kelley, S., 2019, October 25), making it a core component of the university's external education strategy and part of its ivy league academic program.

With 100+ award-winning certification programs, it offers curricula in a myriad of disciplines providing online professional and leadership development to students around the world. Among their certification programs is the leadership certificate in diversity and inclusion, which aims to provide its students with the skills to engage and lead diversity and inclusion initiatives in the workplace. Subject experts and students from around the world participate across all professional fields. Due to the racial diversity of students in the program, "there was an intentional effort to hire instructors that would represent the diversity of the country", said Managing Director of Program Delivery, Heath Leaphart. Leaphart, who was responsible for the hiring of instructors, shared that there was an objective to ensure facilitators had cross-cultural expertise and a shared living experience to the students they would serve. However, the experts teaching these courses have expressed concern about the culture and climate within Ezra's Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) department. After several months of complaints to their superiors with requests for increased compensation, smaller class sizes, and flexible scheduling, leadership saw an increase in attrition of their minoritized employees teaching the courses for the diversity and inclusion certification.

In addition to concerns about facilitator attrition, middle management shared greater concern about the organization's integrity of the program, as well as the priorities of the program's leadership team. Middle management included the Senior Manager for Student

Support Services, Senior Manager for Program Operations, Program Facilitation Manager and the Associate Director for Inclusion. The leadership team consisted of the Vice Provost for External Education, Chief Technology Officer, and the Managing Director for Program Delivery. Some members of Human Resources support the asynchronous program but are not part of the External Education subdivision; they are part of the main university hierarchy.

If the organization, as a leading organization in diversity and inclusion education, is unable to retain BIPOC instructors who represent the diversity of their participants' social identities and experiences, they will be unable to supply the demand for diversity and inclusion certification. According to *Forbes* and LinkedIn (Kelly, J., 2022, January 18), diversity managers (and similar roles) are the second highest sought-out role within today's job market. As such, the desire for diversity and inclusion certification is high, as many hiring managers are seeking certifications and/or accredited education of and for their prospective employees. "It is our #1 certification program in terms of sales ...", said Rebecca Bhill, director of Human Resources for Ezra. "Individuals enroll but we also get many corporations and organizations who seek certification for their staff."

Turnover, in general, is a problem. According to Rakhra (2018), an organization spends large sums of money to hire, train, and evaluate their staff to minimize losses. In their study, Hatch and Dyer (2004) summarized findings that concluded "firms with high turnover significantly under-perform their rivals" (Hatch, N. W., & Dyer, J. H. 2004, p.1155), therefore, organizations will make concerted efforts to retain their staff. Identifying the root cause for staff attrition and addressing these concerns directly impacts the organization, its stakeholders, and the national job market.

Due to the turnover rates at Ezra, the associate director for inclusion, Kayla Black, sought support in addressing the attrition of minoritized employees. Through conversations with several members of the organization, we identified the following problem areas: perception of organizational integrity, misalignment of organizational values, and DEI employee attrition.

This study is important because there is limited research on the relationship between an organization's leadership integrity to the perception of organizational values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, the following are the research questions:

1. How does leadership integrity impact DEI employee perception within Ezra's D+I unit?
2. What are DEI employee perceptions of Ezra's values of diversity and inclusion?
3. How can Ezra leverage its awareness of perceptions in order to better retain Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) employees?

Due to the areas of concern Black lifted during our initial conversation, I chose to review literature that focused on organizational integrity and organizational value; specifically, I wanted to learn if there was any information on relationships between the two. However, research demonstrated a limit in the relationship between organizational integrity and diversity, equity and inclusion. Instead, there were many studies on leadership integrity in relation to diversity. Consequently, I chose to focus on leadership integrity and assess if there were any studies done on the relationship of leadership integrity and the perception of organizational values, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

This study seeks to understand the impact of leadership integrity on the perception of organizational values of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as to identify if either have an impact on the attrition of BIPOC employees. This study also helps address a gap in the literature regarding the relationships between organizational and leadership integrity to perceptions of diversity, equity and inclusion as organizational values. This study will also serve as an improvement project to help address the climate and culture at Ezra and potentially improve their retention strategies.

Research Synthesis

To gain an understanding of the literature, I sought to understand what diversity and inclusion mean. To my surprise, there was much variability on the term "diversity" – meaning

that, although there is a lot of research on diversity measurements and the need for diversity, diversity hires, etc. there was not a comprehensive definition of diversity used in the business sector. Weitzman, M. L. (1992) suggests that many organizations valued diversity but that there was no consensus on a definition except to seek dissimilarities in groups. He argues that seeking dissimilarities does not optimize a working environment (Weitzman, M.L., 1992). Scholars agree, and with the ambiguity of diversity came inclusion as a trending next step toward diversity. Inclusion refers to a sense of belonging (Roberson & Perry, 2021). Roberson and Perry (2021) argue that according to socio-psychological theories of inclusion, “the desire to form and maintain meaningful relationships with others is central to individuals’ physical and psychological well-being as people use such relationships as a gauge of their acceptance by, or position within, social groups” (p. 759). However, individuality must also be maintained and balanced within the desire to be a part of the group (Roberson & Perry, 2021). These two concepts are foundational to this research project as they provide insight into the sort of employees we are seeking to understand.

Diversity and *inclusion* are the root to exploring and understanding other cultural implications that stem from their misperception or absence, which is the center of this improvement study. Often, researchers focus on institutional racism or inequities and their impact on a working environment. Bowser (2017) argues for a theory of racism based on three levels: cultural racism, institutional racism, and individual racism. He argues there has been disproportionate focus on the institutional level of racism and how to eliminate it vs. the relationship between the three levels (Bowser, 2017).

Similarly, the Center for Urban Education’s Core Concepts of Racial Equity (2017) asserts there are three levels to review: micro, mezo, and macro. This assertion aligns with the levels of racism Bowser (2017) suggests, with micro levels including individual beliefs and interactions; mezo levels involving group and collective patterns; and macro levels including institutional and

structural production and enforcement (Bowser, 2017; Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012).

These levels of inequities and/or oppression can impact organizational integrity and workplace diversity. Studies support a direct relationship between leadership and organizational integrity, climate and culture. Researchers have found that organizations, especially predominately white institutions, struggle with workplace diversity and inclusion regarding BIPOC employees and argue BIPOC employees face systemic challenges more than their white counterparts because these inequities become normalized and become a part of a cycle of oppression (Chinook Fund, 2010). These levels of racism and/or systems of oppression and inequality become normalized, resulting in our inability to no longer experience it as abusive, oppressive or out of the ordinary (Bowser, 2017; Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012, Chinook Fund, 2010).

With the acknowledgement that we live in a racist society, scholars have explored additional concepts that normalize racism. These include white normativity and colorblindness. White normativity places 'whiteness' or being white as the social norm and standard for racial identity (Bhandaru, 2013; Morris, 2016). White normativity is considered a subtle form of racism as it suggests that "white people are people, and the members of other racial groups are people to the extent they resemble white people" (Morris, 2016). This "resemblance" can be in behavior, talk, look, and beliefs. White normativity is only inclusive to those who "resemble" white people.

This concept is closely related to colorblindness. Strategic colorblindness, "avoidance of talking about race -- or even acknowledging racial differences-- in an effort to avoid appearance of bias," has been an adopted behavior of whites when confronted with race (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Sue, 2013). Sue (2013) describes strategic colorblindness as a "pattern of behaviors used by whites toward people of color to minimize differences, to appear unbiased, to appear friendly,

to avoid interactions with people of color, to not acknowledge race-related topics, and even to pretend to not see the person's race.”

These concepts and behavioral attitudes inform white people's (dis)engagement with BIPOC and create, as well as sustain, inequities. Equity provides people with the things they, as individuals, need to thrive and be successful (Bopaiah, 2021). Instead of providing equal tools and resources, equity focuses on what the individual needs. The inequity created by white disengagement furthers the experience and level of cultural racism, allowing for flexibility and good intentions to rationalize the difficulties of being anti-racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In their study, Jones et. al. use critical race theory to highlight the inequalities that exist for people of color due to systemic racism; they assert systemic racism increases exposure to the effects of the pandemic, including socially and emotionally (Jones, T. M., Diaz, A., Bruick, S., McCowan, K., Wong, D. W., Chatterji, A., Malorni, A., and Spencer, M. S., 2021). Lastly, the literature suggests Covid-19 and civil/racial unrest have created an unprecedented amount of stress for BIPOC.

While many organizations are struggling with how to help their communities, they are also trying to endure the crisis of Covid-19 themselves (Kuenzi et. al., 2021). Nonprofits across the United States have reported “operational fallout” from the pandemic (Kuenzi, 2021, p.822). Increased employee turnover is a challenge that many organizations have experienced over the last two years due to Covid-19 (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2020). As with Ezra, staff turnover is typically a priority for organizations because an organization cannot succeed if there is high employee turnover (Rakhra, 2018). Due to the desire to control attrition, many studies have focused on effective employee retention practices, but few have looked at why one chooses to leave an organization (Rakhra, 2018). Rakhra noted a study from 2014 that suggested lack of training, career development opportunities and lack of recognition led to staff attrition (p.60). In 2019, Covid-19 became a new variable to cause attrition (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2020; Dill, K., 2021).

In September 2020, women of color held disproportionate unemployment rates to those of any other racial or gendered community and in December 2020, all reported job losses were sustained by women of color (Mooi-Reci, I., & Risman, B. J., 2021, p.161). In their ongoing research, Mooi-Reci and Risman, cite studies that suggest gender and racial oppression disproportionately affected women of color as the pandemic exacerbated already existing inequalities. While Mooi-Reci and Risman highlight inequalities of healthcare, parenting and household responsibilities (p.161), organizational change theory suggests these unprecedented circumstances cause reactions that impact workers' commitment to their organization because of the consequential shifts in their needs (Kuenzi et. al., 2021, p.825). Jones et. al., (2021) assert these inequalities are a result of systemic racism and the increase in the racism from Covid-19 – resulting in an increase in all levels of oppression and cultural as well as systemic inequity for BIPOC (Bowser, 2017; Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012, Chinook Fund, 2010).

For minoritized staff, lack of support to the holistic wellness of BIPOC has resulted in an increase in their attrition (Hamilton & Haozous, 2017; Zambrana, 2018). In addition, there are unique challenges like racial microaggressions, imposter syndrome, and institutional ethnocentrism, that people of color experience, especially at predominately white institutions (Diggs et al., 2009; McCoy, 2020), like Ezra. These vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by Covid-19 and civil unrest (McCoy, 2020). As a result of these circumstances, the nation identified inequitable systems in the United States and the necessary efforts required to correct conditions to promote the success of BIPOC (McCoy, 2020), but little research has been conducted on how to improve the social wellness of BIPOC staff, especially in times of adversity.

Leadership Integrity

Consistency during adverse times and conditions is a quality Monga (2016) suggests is a reflection of leadership integrity. Studies within business leadership literature define leadership integrity as consistency between those who “are” and “do” (McCann et. al., 2017, p.179; Lawton & Paez, 2015, p.640). This is also argued by Kouzes and Posner (2002), who posit integrity is

practiced by people who do as they say they will. However, leadership integrity is more than consistency between speech and behavior but is also based on ethics. Mayer et al. (1995) believe integrity is based on ethical values and the perception of those values. From their research, McCann et. al. (2017) assert that ethical leadership related in a positive way to follower perceptions and work behaviors including job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

Lawton and Paez (2015) suggest a leader must interlock their ethics and purpose with authenticity, a prominent value of leadership integrity. They argue “education is a practice and a university is an institution” (p.643) and without justice or courage, institutions can corrupt practices. They argue it is, therefore, the responsibility of the leader to inform and protect the practice. They offer a model of authentic leadership integrity, constructed of four elements: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective and balanced processing (p.642).

With these qualities and ethics, leaders should recognize and incorporate the wants, needs, and unmet expectations of their followers (McCann et. al., 2017), and do so with an ethic of diversity (p.187). From their qualitative examination of 941 responses of workers in the United States, McCann et. al. found “a significant relationship” between a “highly ethical” leader and an “optimistic attitude of diversity” (p.186-187). In their study, they posit an “ethic of diversity” is the relationship between leadership integrity and efforts toward diversity that are important to decision-making and relationships with stakeholders. Furthermore, they warn that the values and ethics of leaders and their employees must coexist otherwise employees may struggle at their organization (p.187), which may result in high attrition.

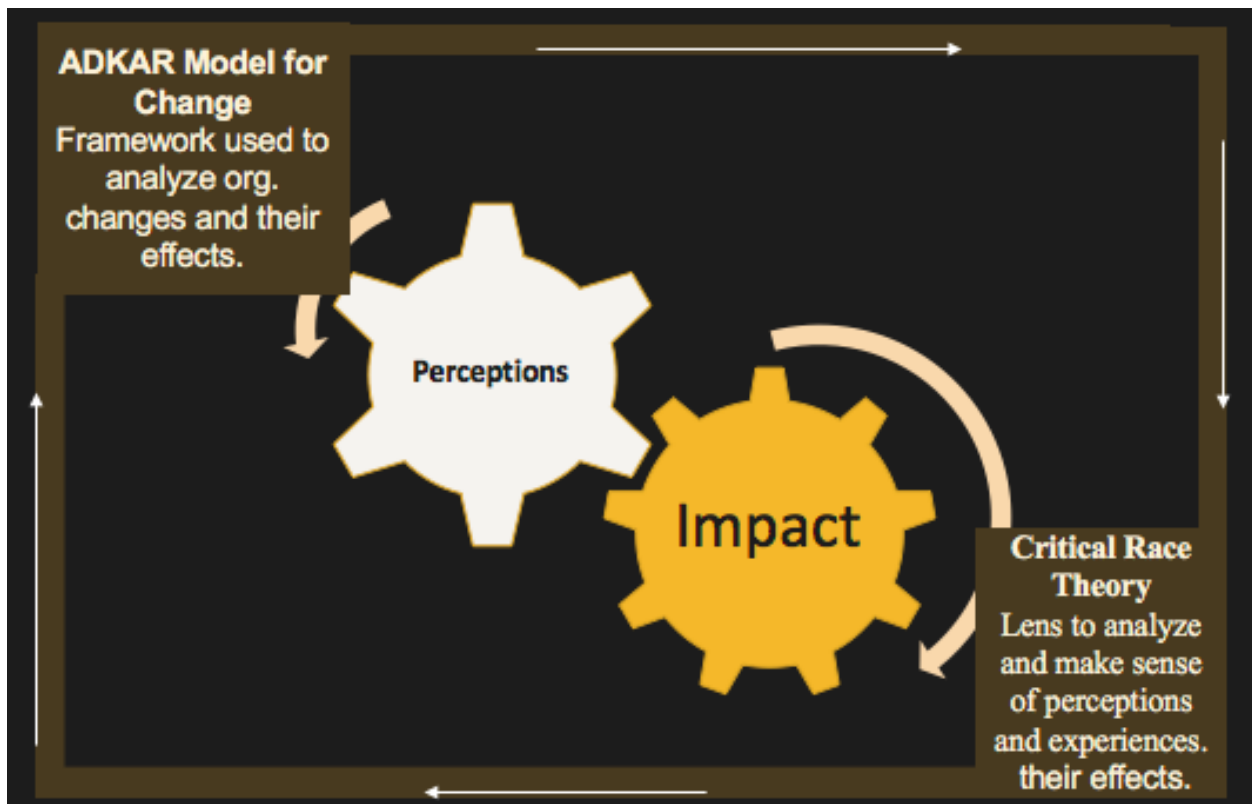
The literature provided several theories and frameworks in relation to my operative concepts of leadership integrity, diversity, inclusion, ethics, and employee perceptions. However, I chose the ADKAR Model for Change Management and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to best conduct my inquiry because, together, they provide an intersectional approach to analyze

leadership integrity and employee perception using a racial lens through the framing of several areas of leadership amidst change.

Conceptual Framework

The ADKAR Model for Change Management posits that successful organizational change occurs when each member of an organization is able to transition to the change successfully (Angtyan, 2019). It utilizes several defined qualities of leadership to inform successful change. For the purposes of this study, change refers to the attrition of DEI employees and the response by leadership to said attrition. To supplement the framework, I have chosen to use critical race theory to make sense of the experiences and perceptions of DEI employees at Ezra.

Figure 4: *Conceptual Framework* offers a visual image of how the ADKAR Model for Change Management and Critical Race Theory is used to analyze and understand perceptions and experiences, as well as their effects, on the DEI employees at Ezra through leadership integrity and an ethic of diversity.



This conceptual framework uses the operative concepts of leadership integrity and an ethic of diversity to inform the construction of employee perspectives. The ADKAR Model for Change and Critical Race Theory are applied in conjunction to one another to analyze the changes at Ezra University and deconstruct those changes through a racial lens.

ADKAR Model for Change Management

This model focuses on five actions and outcomes necessary for successful individual change, and successful organizational change (Angtyan, 2019). Angtyan (2019) asserted these five actions must take place sequentially in order for a change to be healthy and successful. They are:

- (A) Awareness of the need for change.
- (D) Desire to support the participate in the change.
- (K) Knowledge of how to change.
- (A) Ability to implement the change.
- (R) Reinforcement to sustain the change.

The first step is *awareness* of the change. According to Angtyan (2019), understanding why a change is needed or is happening is the first necessary aspect of a successful change. This first step explains why a change is required. For this step to be successful, communication is key so that individuals of an organization can be on board with the proposed change. This first step aligns with McCann et. al. (2017) and Lawton and Paez (2015) who argue for leadership that is rooted in awareness (McCann et. al., 2017, p.179; Lawton & Paez, 2015, p.640).

Desire is the second element of the ADKAR model; it represents the motivation and choice to support and participate in a change. Whereas awareness can be definitive, desire is subjective. A desire to change is only possible after full awareness of the need for change is established. Hiatt states a common mistake made by leaders is to assume that by building awareness of the need for change, desire has also been created (Angtyan, 2019, p. 180). The two are not synonymous and require two different approaches. With regard to Ezra, the change taking place is the attrition within the D+I unit, and the response is the actions taken by Leadership to address the attrition. The remaining staff should be made aware of the attrition by the

Leadership Team and how they plan to respond, including what actions have already been taken. Desire, as mentioned earlier by Roberson and Perry (2021), would be informed by the need to form and maintain meaningful relationships with the remaining DEI staff. This consequently could also potentially motivate the staff by providing a sense of inclusion.

The third element of the ADKAR Model for Change is *knowledge*. There are two types of knowledge that need to be delivered by leaders: knowledge on how to change (what to do during the transition) and knowledge on how to perform once the change is implemented (p.180). Knowledge can be delivered through training and other education methods, such as mentoring, forums and coaching (p.180). Lawton and Paez (2015) posit these behaviors (mentoring, role modeling, and training) are the responsibility of the leader to protect the practices they seek to see in their employees, a prominent value they argue is a reflection of leadership integrity (p.642).

Ability is the fourth element of the ADKAR model and represents the capability to implement the change and achieve success. In this model, there is an alignment of theory to practice. Once knowledge on how to change is acquired (theory), the practice needs to be supported. Ability is not possible without several factors that must be assessed and addressed by leaders: psychological blocks, physical capacity, intellectual capability, time to develop the needed education or skills, and availability of resources (Angtjan, 2019, p. 181).

The last element of ADKAR is *reinforcement* to sustain the change. Ensuring changes are successful and previous behavior and/or practices do not revert to old patterns are achieved through reinforcement actions, like positive feedback, rewards, recognition, measuring performance and taking corrective actions (p.181). This last element of ADKAR aligns with the research and practice of leadership integrity as the those who “are” and “do” (McCann et. al., 2017, p.179; Lawton & Paez, 2015, p.640) by reinforcing their positions by expressing their values, role modeling those values through behavior and reinforcing an expectation of their employees to do the same.

Critical Race Theory

Jones et. al. used critical race theory (CRT) to highlight the inequalities that exist for BIPOC due to systemic racism; they assert systemic racism increased exposure to the effects of the pandemic, including socially and emotionally (Jones, T. M., Diaz, A., Bruick, S., McCowan, K., Wong, D. W., Chatterji, A., Malorni, A., and Spencer, M. S., 2021). CRT emerged in the 1970s from the works of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, who were dissatisfied with racial reform in the United States (Hiraldo, P., 2010). Its objective was to highlight the inequitable experiences of marginalized communities through a racial lens. CRT analyzes the role of race and racism in social inequities between dominant and marginalized racial groups (Hiraldo, P., 2010; Jones et. al., 2021). Since the mid 1990s, scholars have used CRT as a framework to analyze and critique racial discrimination in educational research and practice (Ladson-Billings, 2005). There are five facets to CRT: counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism; whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism (Hiraldo, P., 2010, p.54).

Counter-storytelling provides a voice to marginalized experiences and assist in analyzing a climate and culture. According to Hiraldo, counter-stories can provide opportunities for further research in the ways an institution can become inclusive beyond superficial diversity offering a narrative that can posit necessary changes to make the climate inclusive (p.54). In many cases, counter-stories support the permanence of racism, which is the second tenet of CRT. The *permanence of racism* asserts racism is an inherent part of American society, privileging white individuals over people of color (Jones et. al., 2021, Ladson-Billings, 2005; Hiraldo, P., 2010). Within education, racism may be analyzed through a lens that examines the structural impact (Bowser, 2017; Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012, Chinook Fund, 2010; Hiraldo, P., 2010).

The third tenet of CRT is *whiteness as property*. Due to the embedded racism in American society, this ideology operates on different levels, including: the right of possession, the right to use for enjoyment, the right to disposition, and the right of exclusion (Hiraldo, P.,

2010, p. 55). Historically, the idea of whiteness as property has been perpetuated as an asset that only white individuals can possess, which is similar to white normativity placing 'whiteness' as the standard for racial identity (Bhandaru, 2013; Morris, 2016).

Interest convergence is the fourth element of CRT positioning white individuals as the primary beneficiaries of law and/or policies that foster diversity recruitment and inclusion efforts (Hirald, P., 2010). Hirald provides affirmative action as an example (p.56). While misconstrued as an initiative for people of color, affirmative action was created to leverage the educational access of white women. Ladson and Billings (2005) argued because white women potentially support households where white men and children live, affirmative action ultimately benefits white individuals, in general. Therefore, white individuals benefit from a structure narrated as an institutional correction for people of color.

Critique of liberalism is the last tenet of CRT and stems from the ideas of colorblindness, the neutrality of the law, and equal opportunity for all. As previously mentioned, colorblindness is the avoidance of acknowledging and talking about racial differences in an effort to avoid appearance of bias (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Sue, 2013). For the analysis of this study, critical race theory, specifically the elements of *counter-storytelling* and *interest convergence*, are used as deconstructive tools to process, understand, and analyze the lived experiences of DEI employees at Ezra. The following section describes the collection and analysis of this study.

Data Collection & Methodology

Due to my position as a woman of color who has worked in higher education, specifically predominately white institutions, in the field of diversity and inclusion for most of my career, an ethnographic study felt like the most authentic approach to this research. Ethnographic studies seek to understand culture and require the researcher to study and situate themselves in the cultural context (Bhattacharya, K., 2017). However, the shared experience, perception, and involved social identities suggested a phenomenological study. Phenomenological studies

“require participants to reflect on their experiences in as much detail as possible as part of experiencing a phenomenon” (p.27). Therefore, I conducted a mixed-method study informed by ethnographic and phenomenological approaches.

For data collection, I originally intended to use surveys, attrition data, staff meeting observations, and interviews. These were chosen to ensure veracity through triangulation, a conceptual framework that seeks corroboration of results from different methods (Greene et. al., 1989). These were the selected methods because this mixed method approach would offer the data needed to understand if the metrics from ADKAR were met. As previously mentioned, the ADKAR model seeks to measure awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. My intention was to use the surveys and interviews to identify and understand the perceptions of the DEI BIPOC employees on leadership integrity and DEI values. This data was then to be triangulated with attrition data and staff meeting observations to (1) identify what sort of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement existed, and (2) understand if their perceptions were aligned with the behaviors, actions and values exhibited in staff meetings by leadership. Since my intended participant group were to be the DEI BIPOC employees, CRT affirmed my method choices as these methods provided insight into the tenets of CRT I chose to focus on: counter-storytelling and interest convergence.

However, attrition of DEI employees became a challenge and limitation to this study. When I began this study, Leaphart served as Program Facilitation Manager and there were approximately 35 DEI employees within the department I partnered with. In summer 2022, Leaphart was let go and several more DEI employees left the organization. At the time of data collection, there were 17 DEI employees at Ezra university and three members of leadership in the department. As a result of Leaphart’s departure, Bhill, director of Human Resources for Ezra, was named my contact. During our initial meeting, she shared concerns for the confidentiality of the organization’s employee status and the sensitivity of the study. She

informed me staff meetings were no longer taking place and attrition data would not be shared with me but agreed to the use of surveys and interviews.

Given the significant shift in access and population, I chose to conduct a survey for all remaining DEI employees to assess their perceptions and experiences. I also wanted to interview them to supplement the quantitative data with qualitative data, but Bhill preferred interviews be conducted with leadership only. Therefore, I interviewed those remaining in leadership to understand their intentions, values and behaviors as indicators of leadership integrity, and their potential impact on DEI employees as assessed by the survey data.

I initially began a search for surveys that assessed leadership integrity and/or previously mentioned indicators of leadership integrity, like ethics, values, behaviors, etc. The first study I reviewed was the Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al, 2003), which focused on identifying the impact of ethical leadership on employee job satisfaction. In the revision, done by Khan and Javed (2018), they assert the original scale had a discrepancy – an inability to accurately measure ethical leadership because it did not take into account the cause and effect of the actions of leaders on the experiences and decision making of their employees. Their revision of the Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) was used to inform my questions regarding ethics and leadership integrity.

When learning about the ELS, I came across another scale, the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS). This scale was created to measure the employee perception of leadership integrity and used as an assessment for other institutions (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). Due to its objective and efficacy, this scale was also used to inform my questions on leadership integrity.

Figure 1: Visual of question from survey that uses scale similar to PLIS. This sample from the survey reflects how *leadership integrity* has been defined as those who “are” and “do” (McCann et. al., 2017, p.179; Lawton & Paez, 2015, p.640) by asking about the alignment of what leaders say and do.

leadership by analyzing the expressed virtues and ethics of leaders. The LVQ helped inform the categories of my survey tool.

Figure 3: Visual of question from survey that is informed by LVW's approach to assessing authentic leadership and relational leadership to reflect qualities of ethics and integrity.

Given my experience with the organization, my manager/supervisor demonstrates a genuine interest in how I feel and how I am doing.

Not at all likely. Neutral Very likely.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

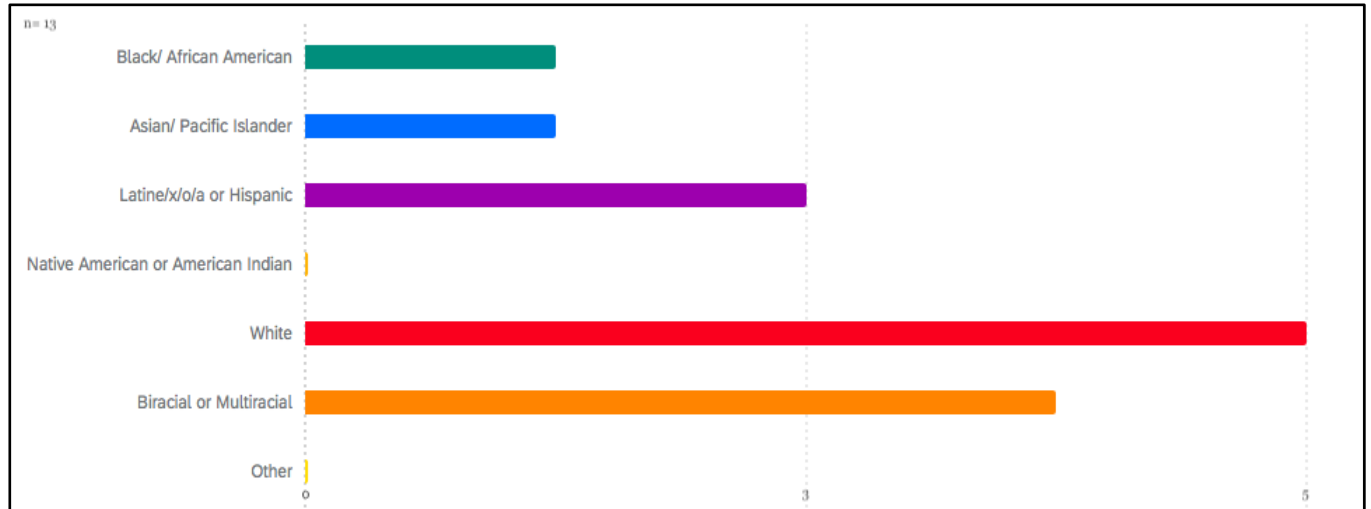
The survey consisted of seven categories: Demographics, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, Organizational Values and Ethics, Organizational Integrity, and Job Satisfaction. Participant selection was purposeful and comprised of the people who volunteered to be part of the study. Bhill administered the messages, links to the surveys and interview sessions through the Ezra listserv for D+I staff.

Analysis

Survey Analysis

The survey yielded 13 out of 17 (76.47%) DEI employee responses at Ezra University. Gender and age diversity were present with 4 people (30%) identified as gender non-conforming, gender fluid and/or other; 6 people (46%) aged between 30-39; 3 people (23%) aged 40-49; 2 people (15%) for those younger than 29 and older than 60 respectively. Below is a table to demonstrate the racial diversity.

Table 1 demonstrates the race diversity of survey participants. 8 people (61%) identified as BIPOC.



The quantitative data from the survey was first analyzed through the ADKAR Model for Change using its factors for each area:

- (A) Awareness of the need for change
- (D) Desire to support the participate in the change
- (K) Knowledge of how to change
- (A) Ability to implement the change
- (R) Reinforcement to sustain the change (Angtjan, 2019, p.179).

Each area of the model has its own categorization to ensure a successful change has occurred. To quantify results, questions from the survey were categorized by whether they attributed to awareness, desire, knowledge, ability or reinforcement using the factors identified by Hiatt for successful change. Due to the use of likert scales across all survey tools and questionnaires identified, percentages were calculated based on likert scale responses to each question.

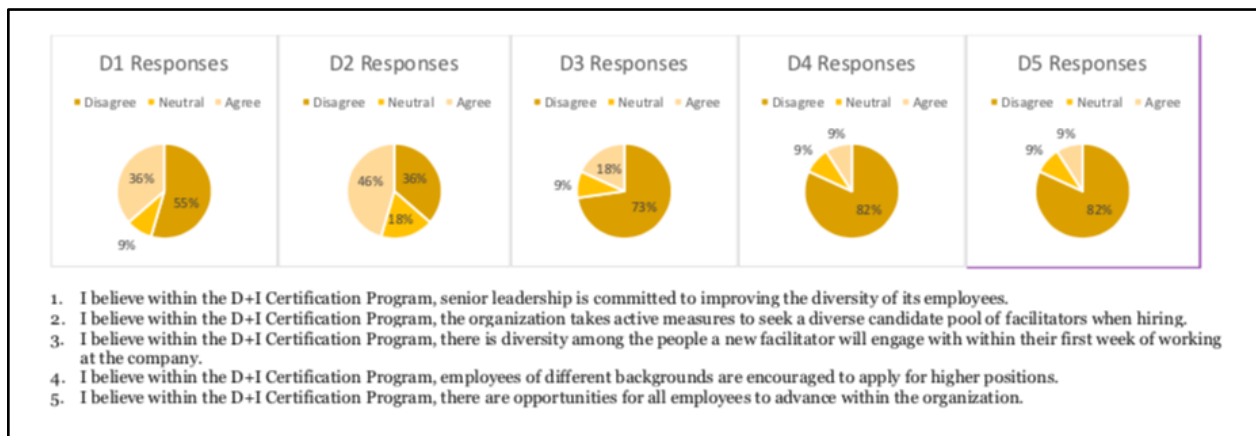
Diversity

As previously mentioned, “diversity” has not been given a comprehensive definition across the higher education or business sectors. In most cases, organizations define diversity by the differences that exist within a group or by diversity measurements (Weitzman, M. L., 1992).

Nishii (2013) has argued that diversity move beyond dissimilarities and multiculturalism but include individual experiences, identities, backgrounds, knowledge, etc. of people from all backgrounds—not just members of historically powerful or minoritized identity groups (p.1754). For the purpose of this survey, diversity is the existence of difference among groups of individuals that makes space for their individual identities, experiences, and knowledge.

For this section questions were informed by the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS) which was created to measure the employee perception of leadership integrity related to issues of diversity and inclusion (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). The questions in the survey were also written to assess the factors of the ADKAR model. For example, the first question, “*I believe within the D+I Certification Program, senior leadership is committed to improving the diversity of its employees*”, assesses the factors of desire and reinforcement. Desire is assessed by what the change is, how it will impact them, and the perceived motivation (Angtuan, 2019, p. 180). Reinforcement is determined by the employees’ perception of the leader to make efforts to sustain the change (p.181). For this question, 7 respondents did not agree, 1 was neutral, and 5 agreed.

Figure 4: *D Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses regarding questions of diversity. There were five questions in this section. Each pie chart reflects the responses per question. N=13



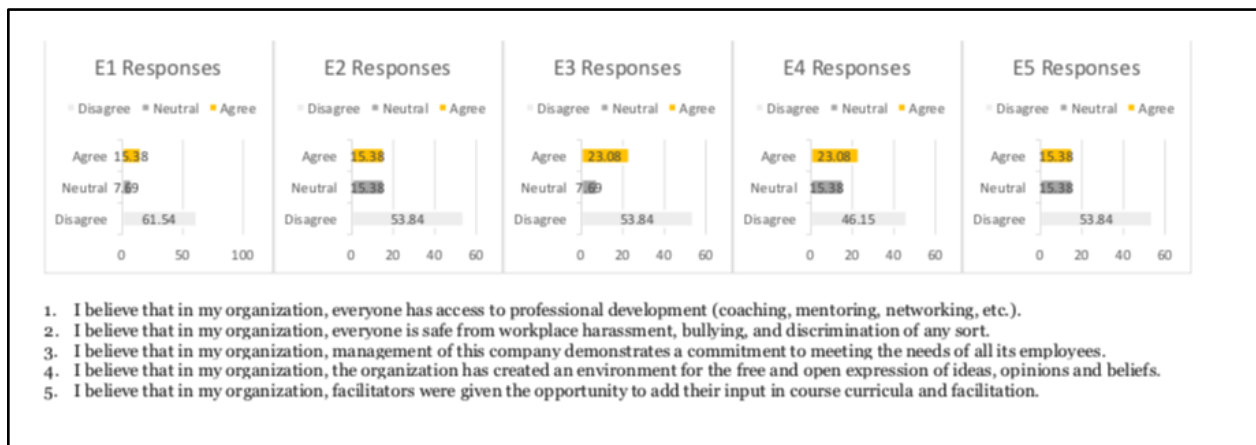
As found above in **Figure 4**, most questions yielded similar results. In particular, question 3 asked about ability. Ability aims to address any psychological blocks, physical and

intellectual capacities, time available, and resources (p. 181). This yielded a disagreement of 8 respondents (53%). Questions 4 and 5 which asked about awareness and desire yielded 10 people (77%) in disagreement. The diversity section demonstrated that most respondents did not believe their organization was committed to cultivating a diverse department or fostering opportunities for diverse engagement.

Equity

The Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al, 2003), which focused on identifying the impact of ethical leadership on employee job satisfaction, and its revision by Khan and Javed (2018) were adapted to form my questions for this section. As a reminder, equity has been defined as the provision of things, tools and resources people, as individuals, need to thrive and be successful (Bopaiah, 2021).

Figure 5: *E Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses regarding questions of equity. There were five questions in this section. N=13



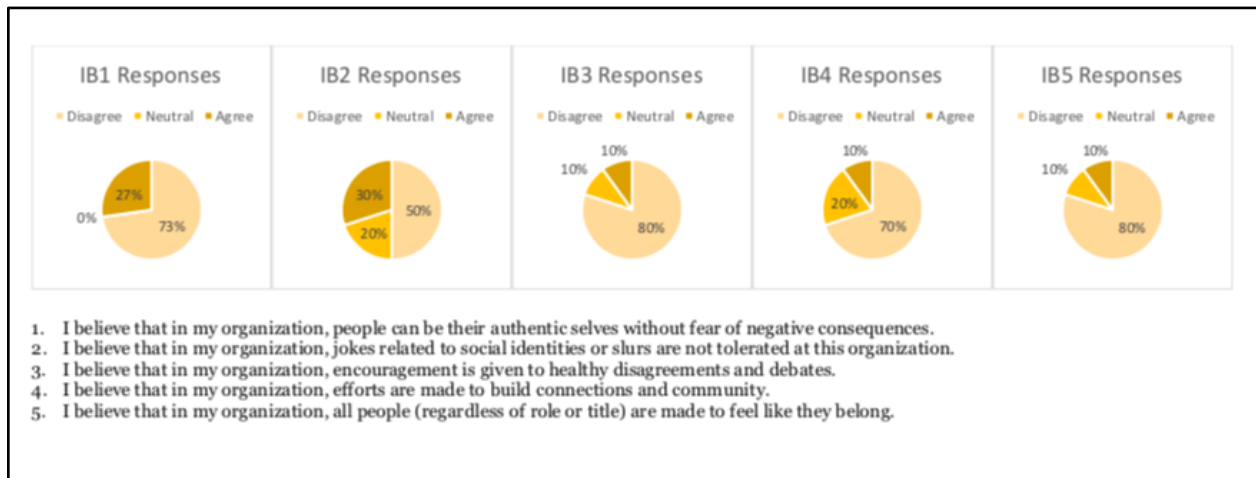
As demonstrated above, many respondents expressed a disagreement in perceiving equity or an attempt to provide an equitable work environment. Question 1 of the equity section, “I believe that in my organization, everyone has access to professional development (coaching, mentoring, networking, etc.)” yielded the highest disagreement with 9 respondents (69%) regarding ability. However, question 3 which also reflected ability (and desire), had 8 people

(61%) who disagreed while 4 (30%) agreed that leaders both desire and attempt to meet individual needs.

Inclusion and Belonging

Kalshoven et al. (2011) identified behaviors that they posited are indicators of ethical leadership that promote a sense of belonging. Roberson and Perry (2021) state a sense of belonging is how to best understand inclusion. They argue that according to socio-psychological theories of inclusion the maintenance of relationships is central to one’s well-being and sense of acceptance. Therefore, the characteristics Kalshoven et al. identified as part of the part of the Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire were used to formulate my questions on inclusion and belonging.

Figure 6: *IB Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses regarding questions of inclusion and belonging. There were five questions in this section. N=13



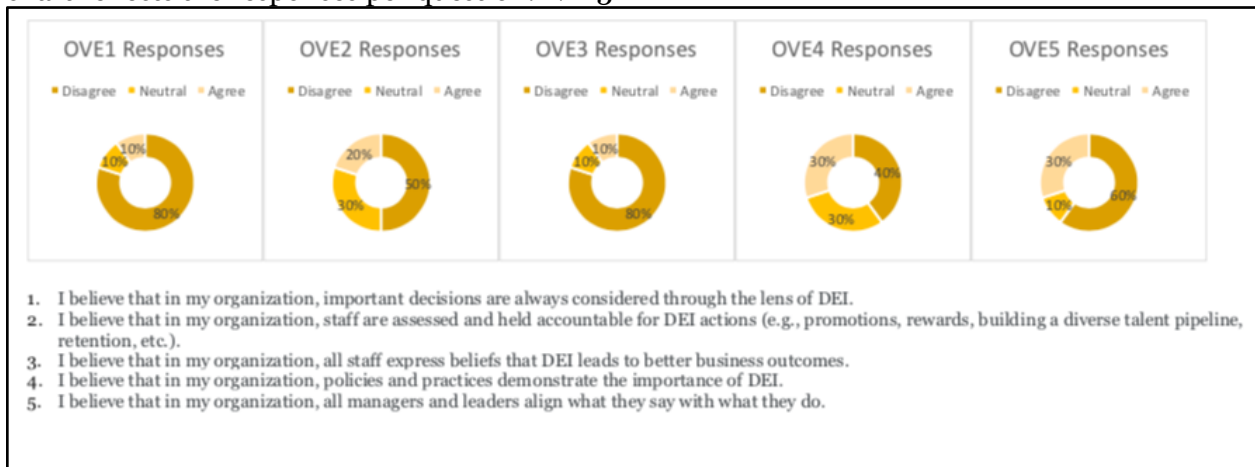
As found above in **Figure 6**, this section also reflected a strong dissenting opinion regarding perceptions of inclusion and belonging within the DEI department of Ezra. Question 1 of this section resulted in the first response where no one chose neutral; every respondent was decisive in their agreement or disagreement. The question asked respondents to state whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral with the following statement, “I believe that in my organization, people can be their authentic selves without fear of negative consequences.” For

this question, which gauged reinforcement, 9 people (69%) disagreed, and 4 people (30%) agreed.

Organizational Values and Ethics

Questions regarding organizational values and ethics were adapted from the Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al, 2003) and Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire (Kalshoven et. al., 2011). This section of the survey demonstrates a diverse perception of organizational values and ethics. Based on McCann et. al. (2017) positioning of an “ethic of diversity” as “a significant relationship” between a “highly ethical” leader and an “optimistic attitude of diversity” (p.186-187), organizational values and ethics refer to this relationship and the perceived behaviors that align in leaders and organizations communication of what they value (Lawton & Paez, 2015). This section also had five questions. Each question focused on a combination of the following indicators: awareness, knowledge, desire and reinforcement. While this section reflects a more diverse perception than other sections, it remains clear that most disagree in believing the department aligns their communication and actions toward an ethic of diversity. As found below in **figure 7**, question 3 asks participants to respond to the following statement, “Given my experience with the organization, leadership discusses business ethics and organizational values with its employees.” Ten people (77%) disagreed.

Figure 7: *OVE Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses to questions of perceived organizational values and ethics. There were five questions in this section. Each pie chart reflects the responses per question. N=13



Organizational and Leadership Integrity

The Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS) was created to measure the employee perception of leadership integrity and used as an assessment for other institutions (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). This scale, in addition to the Ethical Leadership at Work (ELW) questionnaire (Kalshoven et. al., 2011), were adapted to create questions concerning organizational and leadership integrity. With a focus on perceptions of organizational values, this section had 10 questions.

As demonstrated below in **Figure 8**, this section yielded a diverse perception. It also yielded the most binary responses with four questions resulting in either agree and disagree or disagree and neutral. The questions with the binaries of disagree and agree were:

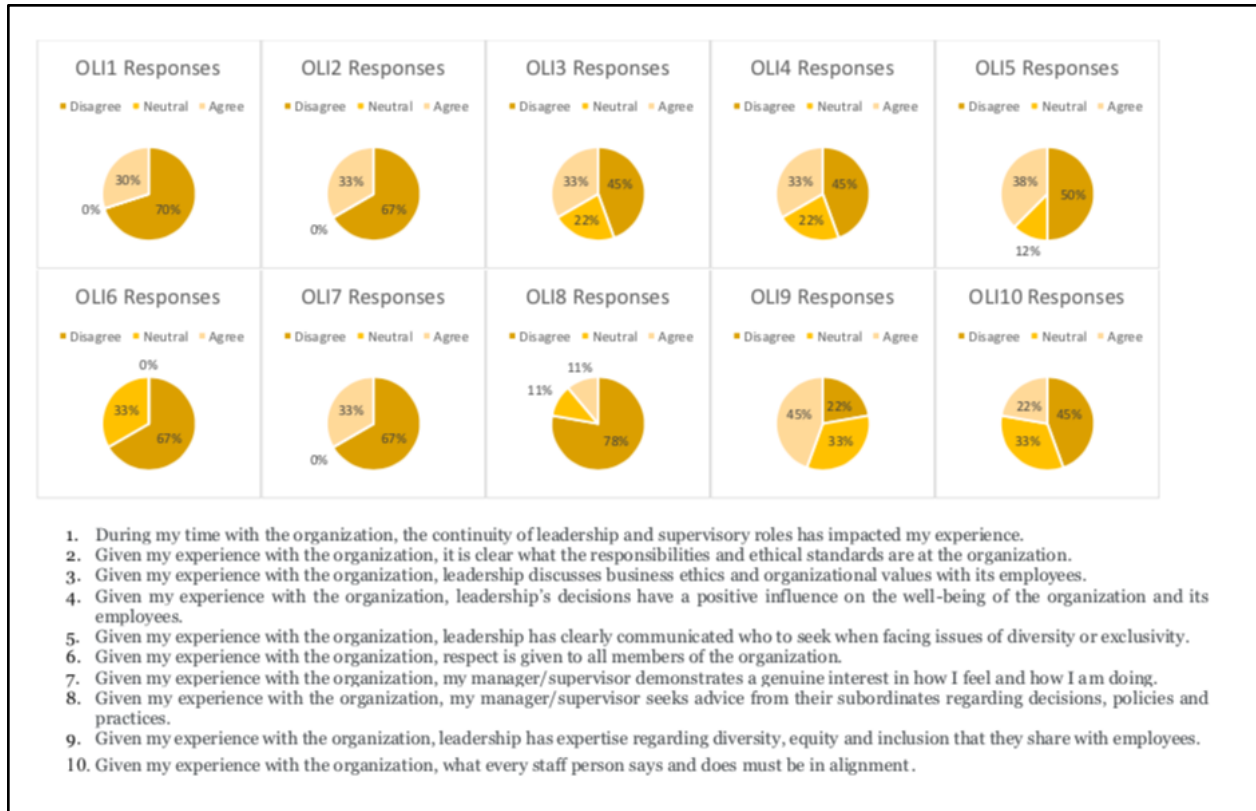
Q1: During my time with the organization, the continuity of leadership and supervisory roles has impacted my experience - ten people (77%) disagreed; three people (23%) agreed.

Q2: Given my experience with the organization, it is clear what the responsibilities and ethical standards are at the organization - eight (61%) disagreed; five (38%) agreed.

Q7: Given my experience with the organization, my manager/supervisor demonstrates a genuine interest in how I feel and how I am doing – eight (61%) disagreed; five (38%) agreed.

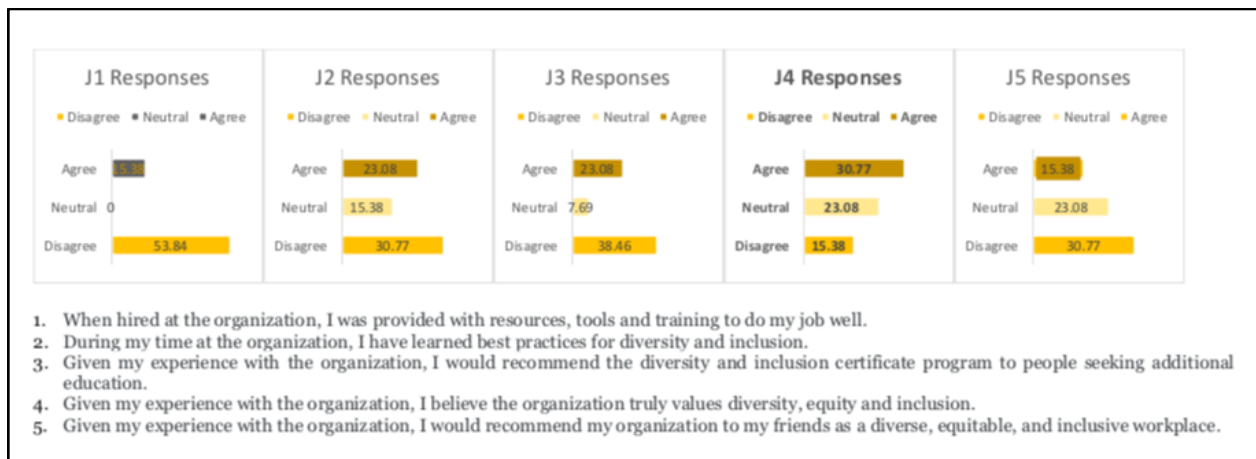
Q6: Given my experience with the organization, respect is given to all members of the organization - eight (61%) disagreed; five (38%) were neutral.

Figure 8: *OLI Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses to questions of perceived organizational and leadership integrity. This section had ten questions. N=13



Job Satisfaction

Figure 9: *J Responses* provides a visual representation of survey responses to questions relating to job satisfaction. This section had five questions. Dark blue represents disagreement; light yellow demonstrates reflects neutral; and green reflects those in agreement. The number on each pie chart indicates the largest response. N=13



This section of the survey was most intriguing as it represents another diverse array of perceptions by the DEI employees, but reflects a more optimistic and/or agreeable perspective by respondents to job satisfaction. Q4 of this section asked respondents to express whether they believe their organization truly values diversity, equity and inclusion. Six people (46%) agreed while four (30%) remained neutral, and three (23%) disagreed, but in Q5, six (46%) respondents shared they would not recommend the organization to someone.

The quantitative portion of the data collection suggests the changes at Ezra University fail to meet the change indicators of the ADKAR Model for Change. There are disparities among the staff's awareness, knowledge, and ability. In addition, there is diverse perception of leadership's desire and reinforcement. These findings support the literature and scholarship that suggests a misalignment of how one perceives their leadership's communication and actions can derail their sense of trust and relationship to the organization, ultimately impacting their experience.

Interview Analysis

When this study began, the leadership team consisted of the Vice Provost for External Education, Chief Technology Officer, Managing Director for Program Delivery, Senior Manager for Student Support Services, Senior Manager for Program Operations, and Program Facilitation Manager. There was one staff person from Human Resources who supported the asynchronous program but was not a part of the External Education subdivision. There were also approximately 35 DEI employees of the certification. However, according to Bhill, attrition resulted in several vacancies across the leadership team and more than half of the DEI employees leaving.

Due to the low numbers, Bhill advised against interviewing survey participants for employee expressed fear of identification and retaliation. Furthermore, due to the very low number of remaining staff in the leadership team, three of the four remaining members chose to engage in an interview and requested no identifying information be used. To honor their wishes

and provide an ethical and mindful space, participants are identified as Participant 1, Participant 2 and Participant 3 respectively. The interviews took place over zoom. Interviewees were given the option to choose whether they wanted to be on camera. I reminded participants that at any time they could request a break or that we stop if they felt uncomfortable or unsafe. I understood the challenges they faced speaking with me and confirmed no identifying information would be relayed.

The purpose of the interviews was to identify themes that may directly answer my research questions by crafting questions informed by the literature, the six categories identified by the LQV, and two tenets of critical race theory: counter-storytelling and interest convergence. The focus of the study was to understand if there was a relationship between perception of leadership integrity and organizational values of diversity, equity and inclusion and their effect on DEI employee attrition. Therefore, consistency of the conceptual framing and use of literature was important. My approach also took into context the findings from the survey when crafting questions to provide greater depth and understanding. Appendices A – C, found at the end of this study, demonstrate the messages sent to participants, as well as a copy of my interview questions.

To analyze the data from interviews, transcripts were made using dictation on Word. This process, while nontraditional, allowed me to edit as the document was created fostering efficiency. I made sure to clean the text by using the audio files and my notes. I then highlighted the terms and contextual language that seemed to come up most often as a mode for identifying themes. Throughout the interviews, it became evident that the three who chose to participate were aware of inequities and dissatisfaction but did not feel enabled to address the concerns and complaints or did not know how to. This lack of knowledge, ability and reinforcement supports Hiatt's (2019) position on the need for all five areas of ADKAR to exist in order for change to be

understood, effective and sustained. **Table 2** found below reflects themes from the interviews in correlation to my conceptual framing.

Table 2 demonstrates the relationship of my conceptual framing to the themes that surfaced from the interviews using two tents of CRT: counter-storytelling and interest convergence.

Themes from Qualitative Interviews						
	Participant	Awareness	Desire	Knowledge	Ability	Reinforcement
	P1	Microaggressions, complaints and bias reports.	Provided mediations and shared concerns.	Unclear on how to address problems.	Feels powerless.	No system in place.
Counter Storytelling	P2	Reports, conversations, and mediations.	Shared concerns.	Believes others are disinterested in addressing problems.	Feels contradicted.	No system in place.
	P3	Attrition increases.	Did not share concerns - felt pointless.	Believes others are disinterested in addressing problems.	Feels powerless.	No system in place.
	P1	External communication on importance of DEI.	Directives to codify experiences, increase standards, and drive output.	Addressing attrition isn't a priority. Output is.	"Business as usual".	More meetings and set expectations.
Interest Convergence	P2	Mixed messaging.	Directives to codify experiences, increase standards to drive output and hire as needed.	Addressing attrition isn't a priority. Output is.	"Feels disingenuous and misinformed."	More work.
	P3	Mixed messaging.	Directives to codify experiences, increase standards to drive output and hire as needed.	Addressing attrition isn't a priority. Output is.	"They just have to do as they are told."	More work with less people.

Findings and Recommendations

Table 3 demonstrates the relationship between my finding and recommendation in correlation to research question and conceptual framework.

Finding	Recommendation	RQ Focus	CF Connection
Lack of collective awareness and knowledge of DEI resulting in a diverse perception of organizational values.	Training/ Onboarding	RQ 1-3 (integrity, perception and impact)	ADKAR and CRT lenses suggest failure of the successful change in this area.
Desire, as defined by ADKAR, by leadership is not evident to DEI BIPOC employees.	Affinity space	RQ3 (impact)	Suggest interest convergence via CRT and indirect relationship of desire between leadership and employees.
Absence of a perceived ethic of diversity.	Climate Study	RQ 1 + 2 (integrity and perception)	Suggest a racist infrastructure of interest convergence and need for positive reinforcement.
	Experiential learning and professional development.	RQ1 (integrity)	Lack of collective perception of an ethic of diversity results in lack of integrity- counter stories necessitate PD.

The data collected from the surveys served to provide a broad understanding of staff perceptions regarding Ezra’s D+I Leadership and the department’s organizational values. This understanding was utilized to inform my qualitative data collection. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative methods demonstrated themes in alignment with a failing change model and consequently, provided the basis for my recommendations. Findings include quotes from the data collection to support a counternarrative, giving credence to experiences that have been isolated and silenced regarding DEI employee experiences at Ezra.

Finding #1: Awareness and knowledge of DEI is not collectively understood, resulting in a diverse perception of organizational values.

Angtyan (2019) posited five indicators for change to be successful. The first is awareness and the third is knowledge. Understanding why a change is needed is the first necessary aspect of a successful change. Based on the survey data, the participants recognized changes in the organization and the department but were not aware of why the changes were occurring. The changes included new policies, practices, standards and expectations, but there was no clear communication. The two quotes below reflect a lack of awareness.

“What I don’t understand is that the work is doubled but the staff is cut in half from all the attrition and instead of addressing the attrition, we are told to drive more output and to the same standard as before. How? It’s unrealistic.” – P1

“The facilitator role keeps having more and more expectations when the pay hasn’t changed which is also not inclusive. Inflation has impacted how far a \$600 per class is worth, but it’s the same rate since 2021.” – BIPOC survey participant

Knowledge is the third. There are two types of knowledge that need to be delivered: knowledge on how to change (what to do during the transition) and knowledge on how to perform once the change is implemented (Angtyan, 2019, p.180).

“In previous experiences, we were allowed to provide feedback and share our knowledge then later only the voice and integrity of the Faculty are seen as truth/valuable. It is not inclusive or equitable to practice elitist ways to only value a faculty input when there are real life lived experiences of those who facilitate are expected to compose the presentations for symposium yet only Dr. Smith presents it.” – BIPOC survey participant

Failure of these two indicators means a successful change will not occur. Furthermore, awareness and knowledge are the responsibility of leadership (Lawton & Paez, 2015), a responsibility rooted in integrity (Kouzes and Posner, 2002) and demonstrated by expressed morality and ethics (Mayer et al., 1995). Subsequently this failure also suggests there is an absence of leadership integrity.

Recommendation #1: To address the failure of awareness and knowledge, ADKAR recommends training (Angtyan, 2019, p.182). A general training would not be enough,

especially for BIPOC employees within the DEI department. As CRT suggests, it is important to underscore the racial implications of any decision. To offer an equitable starting point that would allow all new members to learn and engage in learning the status of the organization, its' policies and practices, I recommend providing an orientation for all new DEI employees at Ezra, regardless of role, so that they may become aware of the values, mission, ethics and practices of the organization. To supplement the new employee orientation, provide on-boarding based on roles so that the necessary knowledge needed to succeed in a role is obtained at the beginning of their time with the organization. Knowledge can be delivered and reinforced through training and other education methods, such as mentoring, forums and coaching (p.180).

Finding #2: Desire, as defined by ADKAR, to foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive department and professional experience is not reflected by leadership.

According to Hiatt, a common mistake made by leaders is to assume that by building awareness of the need for change, desire has also been created (Angtyan, 2019, p. 180).

Roberson and Perry (2021) argue desire can be informed by the maintenance of meaningful relationships. Meaningful relationships at work can happen between colleagues, staff, supervisors and their direct reports, or leadership and middle management. While roles and politics can impact relationship building, so can race (Jones et. al., 2021, McCoy, 2020).

The current leadership team of the D+I department are comprised of people who identify as white and cisgendered. As previously mentioned, white normativity places 'whiteness' or being white as the social norm and standard for racial identity (Bhandaru, 2013; Morris, 2016). White normativity is inclusive to those who “resemble” white people. Attitudinal behaviors like colorblindness and microaggressions are used, subconsciously or consciously, by white people toward people of color to minimize differences, to appear unbiased and friendly, to avoid race-related topics, and to pretend to not see the person’s race (Sue, 2013). This results in white disengagement with BIPOC and creates, as well as sustains inequities (Bopaiah, 2021). The quotes below reflect the disparity of race relations.

“The D&I management team and facilitators feel an authentic bunch. There is an understanding that all team members are an integral part of the organization and its success. Wonderful team - truly ‘walks the talk.’” – white survey participant.

“I do not believe the organization reflects the values they preach.” – BIPOC survey participant

Recommendation #2: Lawton and Paez (2015) posit there are social behaviors, like mentoring, role modeling, and coaching that are the responsibility of the leader to ensure good practices are modeled and implemented across an institution – an indicator of leadership integrity (p.642). I recommend creating affinity spaces with mentors for new employees.

Providing affinity spaces suggests a desire for staff to foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive department by providing a professional space where culture can be exchanged, directly addressing several areas of structural racism by fostering community at the micro and mezzo levels (Bowser, 2017; Martin, 2012). These levels of racism and/or systems of oppression and inequality become normalized, resulting in our inability to no longer experience it as abusive, oppressive or out of the ordinary (Bowser, 2017; Center for Urban Education, 2017; Martin, 2012, Chinook Fund, 2010). In addition, these spaces will illicit opportunities for shared experiences, commonalities and vulnerability aligning to the tenet of counter-storytelling from CRT (Hiraldo, P., 2010). Consequently, this recommendation will also foster a sense of belonging promoting inclusion (Nishii, 2013, p. 1756). Creating these spaces will also address

Finding #1.

Finding #3: The absence of a perceived ethic of diversity by leadership has impacted the perception of leadership integrity at Ezra University.

Based on the literature and data collection, it is evident that changes have shifted employee perspectives. There has been a rise in microaggressive behavior and requests for support with bias incidents, and attrition has risen resulting in a shortage of personnel across the department, including in managerial positions. These occurrences have impacted the experiences of the staff and their perspective of the organization’s and subsequent leaders’ integrity.

“...as an organization, if you are teaching others to be more equitable then you should also practice it.” – white survey participant

“I used to love working here. I felt like I was doing meaningful work and I felt like I was helping to make a difference. I feel so lucky to work with these folks, who are all so brilliant, but my hands are tied on what I can do to support. I think X and I have a fundamental difference in our philosophies and where we see this program going. X changed and so has their leadership. It’s affecting us all.” – P2

Recommendation #3: Ezra University should engage in a department wide, university driven climate study to assess multiple areas and identify differences.

Like all organizations seeking to understand their organizational climate and culture, assessments are taken to identify needs for change (Nishii, 2013). While this study has found discrepancies in experience, perception and understanding, this study is a small sample of the entire asynchronous program. Once a survey is administered, action items to address the organizational threats should be directed and evaluated in 6 to 12 months. Awareness is the first step to a successful change model so becoming aware of the problems and identifying their root cause is where Ezra should begin (Angtyan, 2019).

Recommendation #4: Requiring all members of the D+I department to enroll in its’ DEI courses.

According to Nishii (2013), employee perceptions of diversity are reinforced by both formal and informal alignment of communication and behaviors. This particular argument of reinforcement is the fifth tenet of the ADKAR model and also is an attribute of leadership integrity, as *doing* reinforces the *being*. The training that is offered by Ezra on DEI should be a requisite for all members of the unit, including its leadership. The ideology found in the literature defining organizational and leadership integrity is those who “are” and “do” (McCann et. al., 2017, p.179; Lawton & Paez, 2015, p.640). Therefore, it seems essential that leaders participate in the trainings offered by the D+I department to strengthen their relationships, sharpen skills, and improve perceptions of their organizational and leadership integrity.

The recommendations made pose no additional costs to the department. However, they would require a few institutional changes, such as: time allotted for enrollment and curriculum participation, personnel to lead affinity spaces, and designing an orientation and onboarding for D+I employees, in addition assigning staff to facilitate. To implement each recommendation will take time and will require additional labor from some until new hires and retention are improved. By initiating a climate study, creating new spaces and educational opportunities, the organization will also see an improvement in their retention as these recommendations also support retention strategies previously noted by Rahkra (2018).

References

- Angtyan, Hovhannes. (2019). ADKAR model in change management. *International Review of Management and Business Research*, 8(2), 179–182. [https://doi.org/10.30543/8-2\(2019\)-4](https://doi.org/10.30543/8-2(2019)-4)
- Apfelbaum, E. P., Sommers, S. R., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Seeing race and seeming racist? Evaluating strategic colorblindness in social interaction. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 95(4), 918.
- Bhandaru, D. (2013). Is White Normativity Racist? Michel Foucault and Post-Civil Rights
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism without racists: color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America / Eduardo Bonilla-Silva*. (Fifth edition.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bopaiah, M. (2021). Equity. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bowser, B. P. (2017). Racism: Origin and theory. *Journal of black studies*, 48(6), 572-590.
- Brown, Michael, Hartman, Laura, & Treviño, Linda. (2003). A Qualitative Investigation of Perceived Executive Ethical Leadership: Perceptions from Inside and Outside the Executive Suite. *Human Relations - HUM RELAT.* 56. 5-37.
10.1177/0018726703056001448.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) . 2020. Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey: Access to historical data for the “A” tables of the Employment Situation News Release. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsatabs.htm>.

Center for Urban Education's Core Concepts of Racial Equity (2017). University of Southern California.

Chinook Fund . (2010). *The four I's of oppression - grand rapids community college*. The 4 I's of Oppression. Retrieved September 24, 2010, from

https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf

Craig, S. B., & Gustafson, S. B. (1998). Perceived Leader Integrity Scale: An instrument for assessing employee perceptions of leader integrity. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 9(2), 127–145. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(98\)90001-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(98)90001-7)

Crooks, N., Smith, A., & Lofton, S. (2021). Building bridges and capacity for Black, Indigenous, and scholars of color in the era of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter. *Nursing Outlook*.

Diversity and inclusion. eCornell. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2021, from

<https://ecornell.cornell.edu/certificates/leadership-and-strategic-management/diversity-and-inclusion/>

Dabrowski, A. (2019). Enhancing wellbeing through social capital: Can online education address the teacher wellbeing crisis?. *Independence*, 44(1), 72-73.

Diggs, G. A., Garrison-Wade, D. F., Estrada, D., & Galindo, R. (2009). Smiling faces and colored spaces: The experiences of faculty of color pursuing tenure in the academy. *The Urban Review*, 41(4), 312–333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-008-0113-y>

Dill, K. (2021, October 15). America's workers are leaving jobs in record numbers. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/whats-driving-americas-workers-to-leave-jobs-in-record-numbers-11634312414>

Ely R and Thomas D (2001), "Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 229-273.

Felps, W., Mitchell, T. R., Hekman, D. R., Lee, T. W., Holtom, B. C., & Harman, W. S. (2009). Turnover Contagion: How Coworkers Job Embeddedness and Job Search Behaviors Influence Quitting. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(3), 545–561.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. New York: Routledge.

Gezici, A., & Ozay, O. (2020). How race and gender shape COVID-19 unemployment probability. Available at SSRN 3675022.

Ghosh, A. (2014). Culturally competent behaviors at workplace: An intergroup perspective for workplace diversity. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 21(3), 73.

Gordon, E. W. (1992). Human Diversity, Cultural Hegemony, and the Integrity of the Academic Canon. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 61(3), 405–418.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2295257>

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255.

Greeno, J. G., & Gresalfi, M. S. (2008). Opportunities to Learn in Practice and Identity. In *Assessment, Equity, and Opportunity to Learn* (pp. 170–199). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511802157.009>

- Hamilton, N., & Haozous, E. A. (2017). Retention of faculty of color in academic nursing. *Nursing outlook*, 65(2), 212–221.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2016.11.003>
- Hatch, N. W., & Dyer, J. H. (2004). Human capital and learning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25(12), 1155–1178.
- Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, 31(1), 7.
- Holder, M., Jones, J., & Masterson, T. (2021). The early impact of covid-19 on job losses among Black Women in the United States. *Feminist Economics*, 27(1-2), 103-116.
- Johnson, J.P., Lenartowicz, T., & Apud, S. (2006). Cross-cultural competence in international business: toward a definition and a model. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37, 525-543.
- Jones, T. M., Diaz, A., Bruick, S., McCowan, K., Wong, D. W., Chatterji, A., Malorni, A., & Spencer, M. S. (2021). Experiences and perceptions of school staff regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and racial equity: The role of colorblindness. *School Psychology*, 36(6), 546–554. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000464>
- Kalshoven, Karianne & Den Hartog, Deanne & De Hoogh, Annebel. (2011). Ethical leadership at work (ELW): development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *Circulation-arrhythmia and Electrophysiology - CIRC-ARRHYTHMIA ELECTROPHYSIO.* 22. 51-69.
- Khan, Shazia & Javed, Uzma. (2018). Revision of Ethical Leadership Scale. 12. 121-135.
- Kelly, J. (2022, January 18). The 25 hottest and fastest-growing jobs on linkedin that will be in high demand for the future. *Forbes*. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from

[https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2022/01/18/the-25-hottest-and-fastest-](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2022/01/18/the-25-hottest-and-fastest-growing-jobs-on-linkedin-that-will-be-in-high-demand-for-the-future/?sh=4e1f3bfae8a3)

[growing-jobs-on-linkedin-that-will-be-in-high-demand-for-the-future/?sh=4e1f3bfae8a3](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2022/01/18/the-25-hottest-and-fastest-growing-jobs-on-linkedin-that-will-be-in-high-demand-for-the-future/?sh=4e1f3bfae8a3)

Kelley, S. (2019, October 25). Cornell sharpens its strategic approach to external education.

Cornell Chronicle. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from

<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2019/10/cornell-sharpens-its-strategic-approach-external-education>

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Kuenzi, K., Stewart, A. J., & Walk, M. (2021). COVID-19 as a nonprofit workplace crisis: Seeking insights from the nonprofit workers' perspective. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). The evolving role of critical race theory in educational scholarship.

Race Ethnicity and Education, 8(1), 115-119.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*.

Cambridge university press.

Lawton, A., & Páez, I. (2015). Developing a framework for ethical leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(3), 639-649.

Lim, K., & Zabek, M. A. (2021). Women's Labor Force Exits during COVID-19: Differences by Motherhood, Race, and Ethnicity.

Mann, B. 2014. Equity and equality are not equal. Edtrust.org.

- Mansouri, M., & Roney, J. I. A. (2014). The dilemma of accountability for professionals: A challenge for mainstream management theories. *Journal of business ethics*, 123(1), 45-56.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An interactive model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 709-734.
- McCann, J. T., Sparks, B. H., & Kohntopp, T. F. (2017). Leadership integrity and diversity in the workplace. *Leadership*, 2(5).
- McCoy. (2020). Black Lives Matter, and Yes, You are Racist: The Parallelism of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*., 37(5), 463–475. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>
- McCuiston, V. E., Wooldridge, B. R., & Pierce, C. K. (2004). Leading the diverse workforce: Profit, prospects and progress. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.
- Monga, M. (2016). Integrity and its antecedent: A unified conceptual framework of integrity. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 50(5), 415-421. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2016.0040>
- Mooi-Reci, I., & Risman, B. J. (2021). The Gendered Impacts of COVID-19: Lessons and Reflections. *Gender & Society*, 35(2), 161–167.
- Morris, M. (2016). Standard white: Dismantling white normativity.
- Nishii, L. H., Khattab, J., Shemla, M., & Paluch, R. M. (2018). A multi-level process model for understanding diversity practice effectiveness. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 12(1), 37–82. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0044>

- Palazzo G. (2007) Organizational Integrity — Understanding the Dimensions of Ethical and Unethical Behavior in Corporations. In: Zimmerli W.C., Holzinger M., Richter K. (eds) Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-70818-6_9
- Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2020). What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1), 3-23.
- Rakhra, H. K. (2018). Study on factors influencing employee retention in companies. *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management*, 4(1), 57.
- Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Riggio, Ronald & Zhu, Weichun & Reina, Christopher & Maroosis, James. (2010). Virtue-based measurement of ethical leadership: The Leadership Virtues Questionnaire. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*. 62. 235-250. 10.1037/a0022286.
- Roberson, Q., & Perry, J. L. (2021). Inclusive Leadership in Thought and Action: A Thematic Analysis. *Group & Organization Management*, 10596011211013161.
- Schutz, W. (1958). *FIRO: A three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior*. New York: Rinehart.
- Singleton, K. S., Murray, D. S. R., Dukes, A. J., & Richardson, L. N. (2021). A year in review: Are diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives fixing systemic barriers?. *Neuron*, 109(21), 3365-3367.

Smart, G. (2012). Discourse-oriented ethnography. In J.P. Gee, & M. Handford (Eds.), (2012).

The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis. Routledge.

Sue, D. W. (2013). Race talk: The psychology of racial dialogues. *American Psychologist*, 68(8), 663.

Van Overschelde, J. P., & Wiggins, A. Y. (2020). Teacher preparation pathways: Differences in program selection and teacher retention. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(4), 311-327.

Weitzman, M. L. (1992). On diversity. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 107(2), 363-405.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems.

Organization, 7(2), 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840072002>

Wilensky, J. (2021, January 7). Cornell's revamped external education unit broadens its reach.

Cornell Chronicle. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from

[https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/01/cornells-revamped-external-education-unit-](https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/01/cornells-revamped-external-education-unit-broadens-its-reach)

[broadens-its-reach](https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/01/cornells-revamped-external-education-unit-broadens-its-reach)

Zambrana, R. E. (2018). Toxic ivory towers: The consequences of work stress on underrepresented minority faculty. Rutgers University Press.

Appendix A

Emailed Letter to Partner Organization

Hi Kayla,

Thank you for meeting with me earlier today, I really enjoyed our chat.

As we discussed, I am a doctoral student at Vanderbilt University. This is my final year in the Leadership and Learning Organizations program at Peabody College of Education. As part of the requisite to graduate, students must partner with an organization to complete a capstone project. The purpose of the project is to allow us, under faculty supervision, the opportunity to demonstrate what we have learned to solve a problem of practice or to understand a phenomenon important to our partner organization.

We use a model of evidence-based practice to gather various types of data in a way that will help us understand an area of inquiry for your organization. For the issue we agree to examine, I will use several sources of information:

- what I have learned in my courses and my own professional experience
- information about your organization and the context in which it operates from you
- any data you can provide about the organization and its environment
- and the perspectives of the key stakeholders of your organization.

Through research literature and data collection, I will help you, or whomever is identified as my primary contact, to understand a problem or issue in new ways, provide you with what the current literature says about the problem or issue, and craft recommendations customized for your organization. In addition, I will share ongoing progress and learnings along the way.

It would be helpful to have access to any previous data collected about the problem or issue you would like me to address. With your permission, I may conduct an assessment to better understand the problem and context. This data would be shared with you.

To help identify a (tentative) timeline, the first two or three months will involve developing the scope of the project, identifying questions, and data collection. The next phase will include data analysis. During the final phase, I will prepare findings and recommendations to share with you and your organization.

Our partnership would be confidential, the only person to know the identity of my partner organization would be my adviser, Dr. Eve Rifkin; I will sign an NDA as requested. I think this would be a mutually advantageous opportunity and hope your team agrees. Again, this work is to benefit your team and to demonstrate understanding and application of the lessons learned in my program, a requisite for graduation. Please let me know if there are any questions.

In community,
Valeria
Valeria J. Martinez, M.S.E., C.A.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Vanderbilt University
she/her/ella

Appendix B

Emailed Letter to Survey Participants

Dear Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Certification at X:

My name is Valeria Martinez. I served as a D+I facilitator from 2020-2022 and took a hiatus when I began the final year of my doctoral degree program. My degree will be in Leadership and Learning Organizations from Vanderbilt University. Part of our doctoral requirements is to demonstrate practical knowledge of what we have learned in the classroom. This is why I am writing to you all.

X has agreed to partner with me for my doctoral requisite of evaluating an organization to explore an area they've identified. The Diversity and Inclusion Certificate program was identified as one that we could look at to learn if individual employee perceptions of diversity, equity and inclusion are impacted by Ezra's leadership integrity.

For this study, to maintain anonymity, X has been given the pseudonym of Ezra University. All engagement in this improvement project will be anonymous and will be used to craft recommendations on how to enhance the work and learning experience of folks involved in this certification.

Each of you is invited to complete this [survey](#). The survey should take about 10 minutes and is IRB approved. **Please complete the survey by Friday, February 10 at 5 p.m.** To supplement the survey data collection, I will meet with members of the leadership team.

Please consider engaging in this study. Together, the data collected from the surveys and interviews will be triangulated with other data to craft recommendations to enhance workplace culture and staff experience; your participation will also help to fulfill my graduate requisite.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

In community,
Valeria

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Please state your name, role, duration of time with the D+I unit at Ezra, and your race.

Thank you.

1. What prompted you to work for Ezra's D+I unit?
2. What are the organizational values of the department?
3. Are these organizational values clear to employees? How so?
4. When recruiting and hiring, are these organizational values centered in the application and interview process?
5. What other criteria are used to select new hires?
6. How are employees onboarded?
7. What do you believe are the experiences of employees within the D+I unit? In your opinion, does racial identity impact those experiences?
8. Why do you suppose there has been high attrition over the last few years?
9. What is leadership doing to address attrition?
10. Are those efforts being communicated throughout the department?
11. Is there anything you would like to add that I did not specifically ask about?

Thank you for your time.