

A 21st Century Challenge: Empathetic Leaders and Inclusive Institutions

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Empathetic Leaders &
Inclusive Institutions**

**DIALOGUE
ACROSS
DIFFERENCE**
Practice, Theory, and Research on Intergroup Dialogue
PATRICIA GURIN | BIREN NAGDA & XIMENA ZÚÑIGA

OUT OF MANY FAITHS
THE POWER AND PERILS OF INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP
EBOO PATEL

“Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man’s dignity and integrity.”
Newark Rabbi Joachim Prinz
(Speech preceding Martin Luther King, Jr. at March on Washington, 1963)

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In light of my background as a social psychologist, perhaps it will not surprise you to hear that when I think about the challenge of higher education leadership in the 21st century, as our Mellon colleagues have asked us to do, I think first and foremost about the urgent need to cultivate both empathetic leaders and inclusive, diverse institutions with an expansive reach (in community). I am struck by the extreme divisiveness of our national social landscape and the ways in which it encourages and/or condones a “retreat to our own corners” that is quite simply not good for learning and innovation, not to mention for democracy. Arguably, we have become less good at listening to others, learning from others, and empathizing with others, especially if they happen not to look like us or inhabit similar spaces, and when we do venture across boundaries – intellectual, social, geographic, ideological -- it is frequently a fraught and fragile experience, as scholars of inter-group dialogue can attest.² We have a lot to learn about how to

¹ Keynote Address, Academic Leadership Convening, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, January 30, 2019.

² Rupert W. Nacoste, *Taking on Diversity: How We Can Move from Anxiety to Respect*, Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2015; Eboo Patel, *Inter Faith Leadership: A Primer*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016; Patricia Gurin, Biren Nagda, and Ximena Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference: Practice, Theory, and Research on Intergroup Dialogue*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2013; Patricia Gurin, Group Interactions in a Connected Society, In Earl Lewis and Nancy Cantor, (Eds.), *Our Compelling Interests: The Value of Diversity for Democracy and a Prosperous Society*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016, p.170-181; Danielle Allen, Toward a Connected Society, In Earl Lewis and Nancy Cantor, (Eds.), *Our Compelling Interests: The Value of Diversity for Democracy and a Prosperous Society*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016, p71-105.

catalyze empathy and pro-sociality – states that I will argue are essential for leadership in a knowledge economy and a splintered world.

So I was thrilled when I opened the New York Times recently to find that, as is often the case, an artist and writer had the answer – learn from rodents! Now, far be it for a social psychologist who purposely never spent a day in a rat lab in graduate school to be using the results of an animal behavior experiment on empathy as the basis for guidance, but... thankfully, Henry James Garrett paved the way in his opinion piece entitled: “The Kernel of Human (or Rodent) Kindness: What we can learn from lab rats that don’t show empathy for other rats” (Henry James Garrett, Dec 29, 2018).

The New York Times

The Kernel of Human (or Rodent) Kindness
What we can learn from lab rats that don’t show empathy for other rats.

By Henry James Garrett
December 28, 2018

EMPATHY

≈

MORALITY/KINDNESS



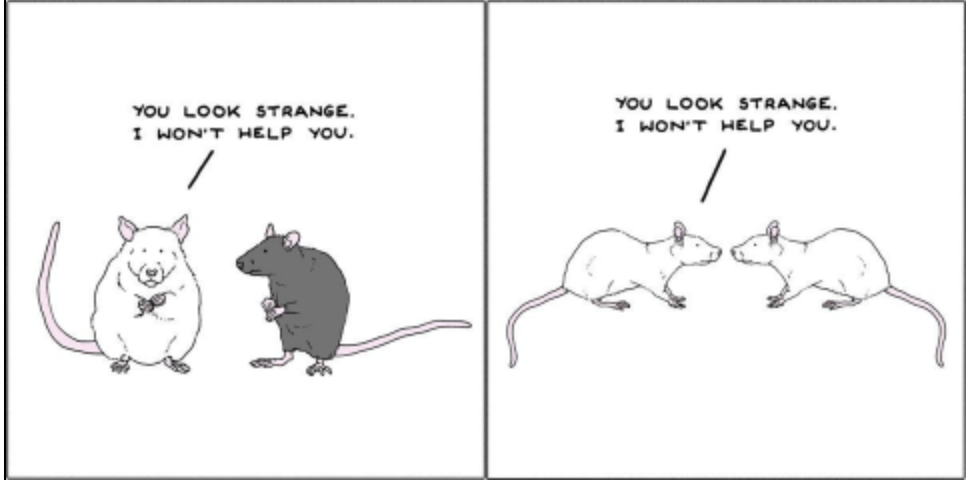
Morality exists only because we evolved the capacity to empathize. And empathy provides the best guide to moral action.

People tend to empathize more readily with those who look, sound and behave like themselves. How then can empathy serve as a moral guide when it is morality’s role to lead us away from cruelty toward people outside our own group?

And since a picture is worth a thousand technical analyses, as you can see here, based on a study in a University of Chicago lab, rats do help out strangers but there are limits to their empathy -- white rats only help a black rat (by opening a trap door) after having lived with other rats of that strain, and they don’t automatically open the door for a white rat from their own strain without having had experience with other white rats– lived experience trumps in-group similarity in catalyzing empathy.

Researchers at the University of Chicago (Ben-Ami Bartal *et al.* eLife 2014;3:e01385) found that a white rat raised among only white rats will do nothing to save a black rat from a trap. Rats, like humans, can be biased in how they act on, or don't act on, their empathy.

In a variant of the experiment, a white rat raised among only black rats would save a black rat from a trap — but would fail to save other white rats.



When the white rats are raised among both black and white rats, they rescue rats of both colors, providing a lesson in the value of inclusive environments.

And a white rat raised among black and white rats rescued rats of both colors. The researchers found that it is not the rat's color that determines which type of rat it will show empathy for, but the social context in which it was raised.

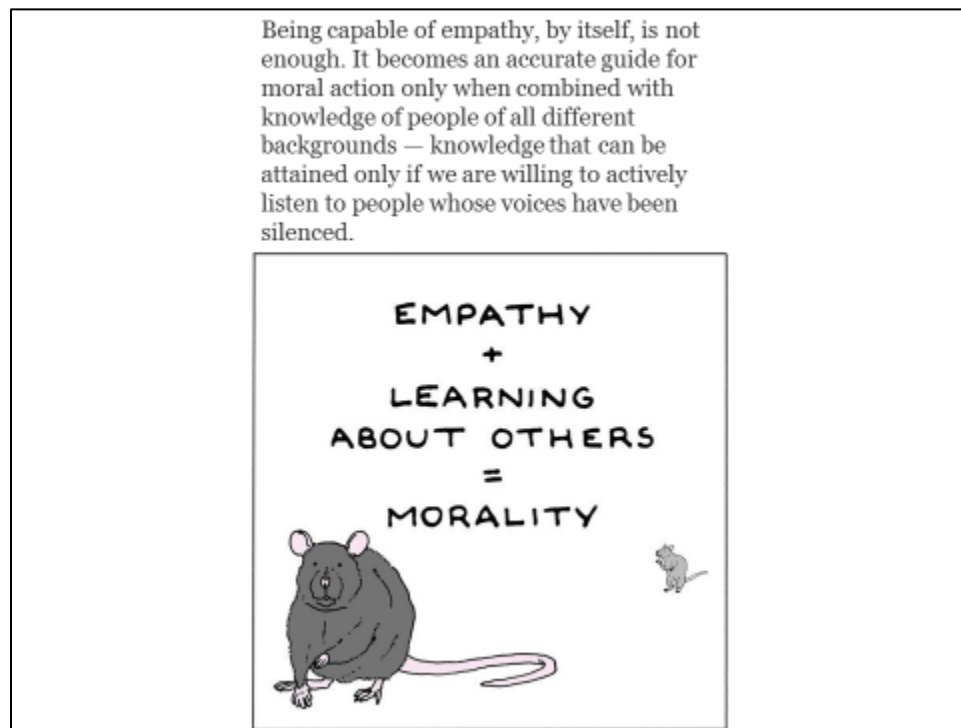
So, prejudice is not baked-in: It is the result of our ignorance. If we fail to learn about people (or rats) of different kinds we may fail to recognize their pain as genuine pain. Empathy can be switched off.

The image shows a cartoon illustration of a candy wrapper. The wrapper is brown and blue. A yellow circle with a red heart inside is on the front. The text "Empathy Co." is written in a cursive font above the heart. Below the heart, it says "NATURALLY FREE FROM PREJUDICE". The wrapper has a white ribbon tied around it.

(As the authors of the actual study say: “Genetic relatedness alone is not capable of producing pro-social motivation.” Ben-Ami Bartel *et al.*, 2014).³ Or, moving again to a more

³ Ben-Ami Bartel *et al.* Pro-social behavior in rats is modulated by social experience. eLife 2014;3:e01385.

poetic platform, as Garrett says: what is required is a social context that encourages us to listen to others different from ourselves.



And, with a bit of artistic license thrown in, he says that empathy is triggered when we listen “to people whose voices have been silenced.”

What does Garrett’s illustration of the underpinnings of morality (in empathy triggered by diverse lived experience) have to do with our challenge? I want to argue here that the cultivation of empathetic leaders, hand-in-hand with inclusive institutions, is our version of the rodent experiment. We need leaders whose instincts will be pro-social – who, like the rats, will reach out and risk acting on empathy, opening the doors for a range of others – but they too need to be learning and listening and leading in inclusive institutions – contexts that trigger and support that forthright pro-sociality. As leaders, we may have a repertoire of constructive, forward-moving instincts (inherited or developed, depending on your preference for nature or nurture). Yet if we don’t put as much emphasis on transforming the institutional context to maximize the potential for success, those instincts may remain unrealized, just as the white rats without the lived experience don’t open the trap door for the black rats, or vice versa. We need an acute awareness of what the literature on group dynamics calls the contact hypothesis – the more contact you have with difference the less off-putting it will be; even the mere exposure effect might work to begin the process of listening to those often silenced voices. As such, indirect experience can sometimes work, as demonstrated frequently by the powerful impact of the visual and performing arts in catalyzing empathy. Whether the lived experience comes from direct contact, mere exposure, or creative apprehension, the institutional context that provides and encourages it is critical, especially as we live in a digital world that tends to exacerbate a penchant for self-selection into otherwise homogeneous environments (where all the rats look and think alike).

Taking seriously the social context for learning and empathy (and innovation – as Scott Page suggests in his recent book, *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*)⁴ shines a light on some habits of the academy that may be problematic for higher education leadership today. In particular, I want to argue that much of what we have assumed goes into good leadership and strong institutions may not work in an ever-more diverse and complicated world – one riskily prone to digital withdrawal more than to social connectedness and empathy and learning with others. I would suggest that we may need to be both individually and institutionally: less monastic and more engaged, less inward and more outward-looking, less competitive and more collaborative, less thoughtfully cautious and more risk-taking, less conserving (of tradition) and more experimental, less enamored of nature and more open to nurture and the potential of growth mindsets, less sure of our (received) wisdom and more open to listening to new voices. And with this as a general framework, I thought I would attempt to unpack a bit of the specifics of the context for and tasks of higher education leadership as I see them today, with the clear caveat that I am seeing them through the lens of a social psychologist, for I always say when people ask why I “gave up my scholarly work” that I do social psychology 24x7 in this job.

Some Critical Contexts for and Tasks of Higher Education Leadership Today

The turbulence of our times sets a critical context for and determines many tasks of higher education leadership today. It is reflected in both the heightening of polarization (across social identity, geographies, institutions and sectors) and the intensification of what I’ll call for simplicity sake the politics of within-group activism (as seen, for one example, in the pitting of the interests of urban communities of color with those of rural white communities, despite the common plight of stagnated economic and social mobility). And while it is tempting to say that this stormy landscape shouldn’t set the context for higher education or its leadership, I believe that it does precisely that, despite our best efforts at being rather monastic and ecumenical and mission-focused.

In part, we sit in the middle of a perfect storm (of blame), as we control ever more the lever to economic opportunity and social mobility, precisely at a time when so many groups feel left-out, side-lined, and threatened, be they rural white working class, urban communities of color with under-resourced K-12 schools, Dreamers worried about citizenship, workers side-lined by automation. We are not always seen as a good neighbor (more aligned with technology and globalization than with our local communities, either rural or urban) nor are we seen as a fully welcoming place for a fast diversifying population. In this regard, consider Raj Chetty and his colleagues’ data⁵ on the dismayingly slow pace of change in socio-economic diversity at top institutions despite very substantial efforts at increasing student financial aid; and Anthony Carnevale and his colleagues’ recent report⁶ on similarly slow progress in racial/ethnic diversity at selective public institutions despite very real commitments to holistic admissions. So, while the national landscape and its politics of division serves as the backdrop, we sit in the midst of

⁴ Scott E. Page, *The Diversity Bonus: How great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

⁵ Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan, Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility, NBER Working Paper No. 23618, July 2017, www.equality-of-opportunity.org.

⁶ Anthony P. Carnevale, Martin Van Der Werf, Michael C. Quinn, Jeff Strohl, and Dmitri Repnikov, *Our Separate & Unequal Public Colleges: How Public Colleges Reinforce White Privilege and Marginalize Black and Latino Students*, Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University, Washington, DC., 2018.

very real concerns about legitimacy, harkening for me back to Sandra Day O'Connor's warning in her decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* that "the path to leadership must be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity."⁷ Whereas O'Connor was referencing legitimacy concerns around race and ethnicity, the same argument applies much more broadly to all of the many constituencies and groups and communities at our doorsteps.

And this legitimacy concern relates both to who we let in our doors to transform our own institutions and to how often we go outside our doors so to speak and share human, intellectual, creative, and financial capital, collaborating in communities in their efforts at empowerment, and building what John Dewey called the associative networks that define democratic practice.⁸ In turn, it sets up, I would argue a critical task for higher education leadership and that relates back to our rodent friends and their expansive response to the needs of others – from similar and from different strains. Can we cultivate a new generation of higher education leadership that models empathetic citizenship (individually and institutionally), in a moment when, arguably, the collision of demographic diversification, changes in the nature of work, and polarizing politics make individuals, groups, institutions, sectors, communities and nations very defensive (some fearful of a redistribution of power) and very demanding (some asserting grievances over the longstanding absence of power) and very selfish (all more inwardly hoarding than outwardly giving)?

These new empathetic leaders (and the empathetic institutions they lead) would have to be ready to take what I call an outside-in perspective, asking what the public (broadly defined, within and outside our walls) needs from higher education (versus assuming we know the answer) and, as Henry James Garrett suggested, listening too to the voices that have been previously silenced. The broad challenges we as a nation and world face today are not new, indeed, they are hauntingly familiar, ranging, among others, from Charles Tilly's economic analysis of "durable inequalities" and "opportunity hoarding"⁹ to our persistent failure to learn from our fraught narrative of race in America about our proclivity to erase history, as Khalil Muhammad eloquently argues¹⁰ and then our proclivity to repeat its worst impulses (from widespread nationalism to racial/ethnic supremacy to religious persecution and forced assimilation) rather than aspire to leverage pluralism, as Eboo Patel narrates in his latest volume, *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise*.¹¹

When we take this outside-in perspective as academic institutions on what is pressing around us, the solutions that our many communities and publics need from their higher education partners may require improvisation, even if the challenges are familiar. For example, we know more of our public want to feel included in higher education, but while we invented standardized testing to do just that many decades ago, now it does more to exclude than to include, as Nicholas Lemann has argued.¹² Similarly, so many of our students, faculty, and neighbors want

⁷ Sandra Day O'Connor, writing for the majority in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, No. 02-241, Supreme Court, June 23, 2003, 3-4.

⁸ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Mineola, NY.: Dover Publications, 1916, p.87

⁹ Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.

¹⁰ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, No Racial Barrier Left to Break (Except All of Them), *The New York Times*, January 14, 2017.

¹¹ Eboo Patel, *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity & The American Promise*, Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2018.

¹² Nicholas Lemann, *Forward* in reissued volume: William Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*, Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

to feel that higher education is opening up in big ways, to accommodate the massive demographic shifts around us, and yet traditionally we have shaped our commitments to diversity as a “minority strategy” that allowed for a few more place-settings at the same old table. Now we need to fundamentally reset the table, seeing diversity as a “majority strategy.” This involves questioning value of homogeneity (to innovation) as much as we work to defend the value of diversity against those who see it as eroding quality, as Katherine Phillips suggests.¹³ We need to look at many dimensions of diversity, unpacking simplistic notions (e.g., Muslims don’t all hail from the Middle East, and Latinx heritage includes those whom the Census Bureau would label as white) and attending in a nuanced way to the absences in different places (e.g., Asian heritage scholars in the humanities). In the same vein, this complex and nuanced social identity map requires us to be ready to do the hard work of inclusion, not just to presume that our legacies of tolerance and egalitarianism will carry the day in this new day, drawing an analogy to what Leon Botstein wrote in the Chronicle when he urged us to “stop the generational moralizing about free speech.”¹⁴

And, as we move outside our institutional selves, there is much to transform about our “cult of the expert,” as Harry Boyte calls our proclivity to determine what is needed for others without truly involving them.¹⁵ For example, while many land-grant (public) institutions committed to community engagement in an era of agrarian industrialization, and many private, once-religiously affiliated institutions have a legacy of service, now we need more democratic, collaborative, and complex anchor institution strategies, as the Anchor Institution Task Force movement calls for today.¹⁶ Our local, place-based strategies will likely vary from those tailored more to the impact of capital flight and automation in much of rural America, to those acutely aware of a racial equity lens in urban America where the sequelae of the architecture of segregation¹⁷ and the advent of gentrification/displacement has taken its toll, as Ryan Haygood and Demelza Baer depict in their analysis of the Two Americas where I live in Newark, NJ¹⁸ The nuances of what the public needs in different geographies will resonate across the globe, opening up avenues for local/global resonance, even as we recommit to being good neighbors at home.

To be able to play this more affirmative, constructive role in knowledge building and talent cultivation for a just society, we have to then be open to transforming our practices, norms, institutional cultures, power structures and systems of incentives, and the new generation of leaders will have to push – and sometimes push hard. We will all have our own sense of what the fundamentals of transformation look like, but for me what sits at the heart of it is to break down the siloes within which we operate, to revise the social capital networks which we draw upon, and to incentivize more varied engagements – more encounters with strangers from other strains (to revisit our rodent friends once again) in contexts that stretch experience, within and beyond the academy. This might include encouraging more varied cross-institutional collaborations, such as between community colleges and four year institutions or universities and

¹³ Katherine W. Phillips, What is the Real Value of Diversity in Organizations? Questioning our Assumptions, In Scott E. Page, *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 223-245.

¹⁴ Leon Botstein, Stop the Generational Moralizing About Free Speech, *The Chronicle Review*, December 4, 2017.

¹⁵ Harry Boyte, *Civic Agency and the Cult of the Expert*, Dayton, Ohio: The Kettering Foundation, 2009.

¹⁶ See the Anchor Institutions Task Force, www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf.

¹⁷ Paul Jargowsky, Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy, *The Century Foundation*, Report: Race and Inequality, August 7, 2015.

¹⁸ Ryan Haygood and Demelza Baer, *Bridging The Two Americas: Employment & Economic Opportunity in Newark & Beyond*, Report of the New Jersey Institute For Social Justice, Newark, NJ., 2017.

cultural institutions; it might mean building new social capital networks from public officials, corporate partners and trustees to community organizers, artists, faith leaders and school teachers; it might encompass incentives for bridging artificial academic and geographic divides, to mix up the strains a bit, for example crossing the street from technology and science and the professions to the arts and humanities and cultural disciplines— think, for example, of entrepreneurship as a liberal art (as my colleague Ted Baker in the Rutgers Business School does)¹⁹ or the creative disciplines as central to innovation (going from STEM to STEAM) or the social sciences as essential to smoothing what the National Science Foundation calls the challenge of the human-technology interface or the role that lawyers, journalists, and artists are playing in adjudicating algorithmic justice in our big data world (as showcased in the Algorithmic Justice League, organized by MIT’s Media Lab).²⁰ As we expand this map of the academic lived experience – who we live with, play with, work with, partner with and depend upon and where we do it – I believe that we will be better positioned to gain the public trust as we navigate the turbulence of our times. In turn, the public trust, which comes from being seen as accessible to more of the public and more interested in the public good, may provide its own measure of protection to higher education to experiment, debate, and dialogue, within our scholarly community, about all that is so contested beyond our gates.

And this brings me to what may seem like a bit of a contradictory message about the value of the empathic leader and the outside-in perspective from the public to the academy. Whereas I firmly believe that we as leaders (and our institutions) have an obligation to open ourselves in every respect and be responsive to the public and the communities within which we sit, I also believe that we do not have to, nor should we, do that in ways that hamstring our ability to educate and innovate and create in an inclusive scholarly community. To say it bluntly, just because our nation is tolerating an awful lot of divisive, even hateful, speech these days doesn’t obligate universities to knee-jerk to the free speech defense of actions and pronouncements that target some in ways that belie the inclusive scholarly communities we are trying to build, as Joan Scott wrote in her recent *Chronicle* piece entitled “How the Right Weaponized Free Speech.”²¹ As much as free speech is a pivotal practice in the academy, perhaps it can’t always take precedence if it takes us too close to tolerating hate speech, for example. Admittedly, it is often very hard to decide what is too close to be tolerated, but forthright leadership, as I believe, for example, Carol Folt demonstrated in her most recent decision to remove the vestiges of Silent Sam from the UNC campus, is still the right aspiration in my judgment. As Earl (Lewis) and I suggested in an opinion piece, *After Charlottesville*, each community (or university) deserves the right to ask how it squares history and memory – and the answer won’t be the same for every community -- but leadership—courageous leadership—requires that leaders confront the issue head on.²² Whereas our national narrative seems to want to paper over some legacies of exclusion and discrimination and assimilate all woes to a (watered down) whole (Black Lives Matter becomes All Lives Matter), perhaps it is now the time for leaders to remind our communities of the particulars of some legacies, as they impact our mission.

¹⁹ Ted Baker and E .Erin Powell, Entrepreneurship as a New Liberal Art, *Small Business Economics*, 2018, in press.

²⁰ See www.ajlunited.org; www.media.MIT.edu.

²¹ Joan Scott, How the Right Weaponized Free Speech, *The Chronicle Review*, January 7, 2018.

²² Earl Lewis and Nancy Cantor, *After Charlottesville*, *Huffington Post*, August 21, 2017.

Legacies of Exclusion

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
**How the Right Weaponized
Free Speech**



Illustration: Steven for The Chronicle
By Joan W. Scott JANUARY 07, 2018

"After Charlottesville"
Lewis & Cantor 2017



Photograph by Samuel Zuckerman, The Chronicle of Higher Education

Silent Sam




The New York Times
**Linda Brown and the
Unfinished Work of
School Integration**

Elise Boddie and Dennis D. Parker
March 30, 2018



*"I have said before
and reiterate here
that only an ostrich
could regard the
supposedly neutral
alternatives as
race unconscious."*

Supreme Court Justice Ruth
Bader Ginsburg, *Fisher*

And this need for forthright and perhaps risk prone leadership is just as true in less fraught but perhaps still critical contexts when core institutional values and practices must be defended against popular opinion or risk-adverse advice that if followed would significantly impede our educational mission, as Lee Bollinger articulated in a recent panel discussion with me and Elizabeth (Alexander) at Columbia on the role of universities in promoting just societies. Of course, we will all have our own rendition of those core educational values (and their allied practices) that need defending, but what comes to mind for me in this instance is the need to promote the educational value of diversity against the push from some so called color blind approaches (to admissions, employment) – for as Ruth Bader Ginsburg famously noted in the *Fisher* case, “I have said before and reiterate here that only an ostrich could regard the supposedly race neutral alternatives as race unconscious.”²³ To explicitly ignore how the experiences of race would have shaped what a candidate for admissions would bring to (enrich) the collegiate table seems both unwise and anti-intellectual, even ignorant in a land with our racial history and contemporary reality, as my colleague Elise Boddie in the Rutgers-Newark law school has argued in making the case today for continued efforts to realize the educational purposes of *Brown v. Board* in inclusive, integrated K-12 schools.²⁴

Some things are worth defending, even when they are unpopular, and I return to the notion that the next generation leaders in higher education may need to stake out some unpopular ground, sometimes, protected a bit, we hope, by their demonstration of credible empathy with many publics and alternative positions. This is certainly a tightrope that many leaders in this room and across higher education have walked in both assertively defending affirmative action while creating spaces for contested dialogue about it, on campus and in public venues – we certainly tried to walk that path in Michigan, when Earl (Lewis) as dean of Rackham Graduate

²³ Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Dissenting Opinion, *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, No. 11-345, 570 U.S., June 24, 2013, p.2.

²⁴ Elise Boddie and Dennis D. Parker, Linda Brown and the Unfinished Work of School Integration, *New York Times*, March 30, 2018.

School held debates and dialogues there, even as he and we constructed the defense of affirmative action (against the position of some faculty on campus and some alumni and politicians in the state) in *Grutter* and *Gratz*.²⁵ And persistence seems to be the name of the game, as some contests never seem to go away, as we see today.

Some Skills and Orientations that Help Empathetic Leaders

As we navigate and often re-navigate the same contested ground, resilience will be required so as not to immediately succumb to risk aversion simply because multiple competing values and views can be articulated (and surely will be by lawyers and trustees and pundits of all stripes). At the same time, the skill of knowing how to follow that moral compass without adopting an off-putting moral high ground attitude, strikes me as especially relevant to good empathetic leadership – and very difficult to do well. I certainly experienced that tension in trying (unsuccessfully) to navigate the very stormy town/gown divisions around my strongly held and openly articulated belief in the need to retire UIUC’s Indian mascot, Chief Illiniwek (which actually had no real lineage in any indigenous Illinois community, but was long beloved by generations of Illinois alums, some students, and many residents of Champaign).



And, as I learned vividly in the moment, when my daughter was practicing with her high school cross-country team and encountered the huge anti-Cantor billboards publicly displayed across Champaign, the moral high ground gets us nowhere (in convincing those who disagree) even as one’s moral compass may then take you out of town – as it did for me. Certainly it is best to do a better job than I did of pursuing core values without alienating core constituencies –

²⁵ Patricia Gurin, Jeffrey. S. Lehman, & Earl .Lewis, (Eds.) *Defending Diversity: Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

and I am glad to say that my dear friend Robert Jones is doing just that as chancellor today, even as he faces the long-arm of Illinois history.



But sometimes the context just isn't amenable to your leadership and following that compass out is best for all. I like to think that that is a lesson in leadership too.

Along with the lesson of needing to avoid the moral high ground comes the value of fine-tuning an attitude of humility, often a foreign stance for us as purpose-driven leaders. For as much as we need to lead with our core values/vision/purpose and be willing to stick with them, there is also a need for some large dose of humility, not only in terms of whether we are seeing the situation accurately or recognizing multiple plausible positions on an issue, but also on the likelihood of reaching a reasonably satisfactory compromise or even making progress on a key agenda.

As social psychologists have shown repeatedly, high achieving people are very prone to the fundamental attribution error about their own achievements, attributing too much causal power to personal will and smart strategies and under-valuing the role of situations in facilitating success (or, conversely, in determining failure).²⁶ The rats in the experiments that Garrett depicts are quite likely to keep exhibiting empathy because it is a winning strategy in the laboratory setting (the trap door always opens when the rat attempts the rescue). By contrast, in our more contested and messy worlds, the trap door only rises occasionally, and less often than (successful) leaders tend to acknowledge. Failures are quite commonplace, keeping humility as a virtue to perfect. For example, as good as our defense of affirmative action was in the Michigan cases, the decision in *Grutter* was as much a function of context and good timing as anything else. The composition of the court made a difference, as we may see soon, and the timing was in our favor, as many in the corporate and military worlds had redoubled their efforts

²⁶ Arthur G. Miller, Edward E. Jones, and Steve Hinkle, A Robust Attribution Error in the Personality Domain, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol 17, Issue 6, 1981, pp.587-600.

to diversify their leadership – a theme that O’Connor picked up on in her decision. Today, in what feels like a much more zero-sum world, the likelihood that an emphasis on the compelling interest of learning from and with others from different strains, so to speak, would be a winning strategy seems less assured, as do doors routinely opening in the face of empathetic outreach. Of course, it helps when there are other rats (leaders) willing to keep trying with you, so we should all value collaboration and collegueship at least as much as individual willpower and persistence. I’d go with the lesson and power of humility as compared to the fundamental attribution error ensconced in our American myth of the leader doing it all alone against all odds. Which just goes to underline at least my belief that winning on our own is not the only signpost of successful leadership.

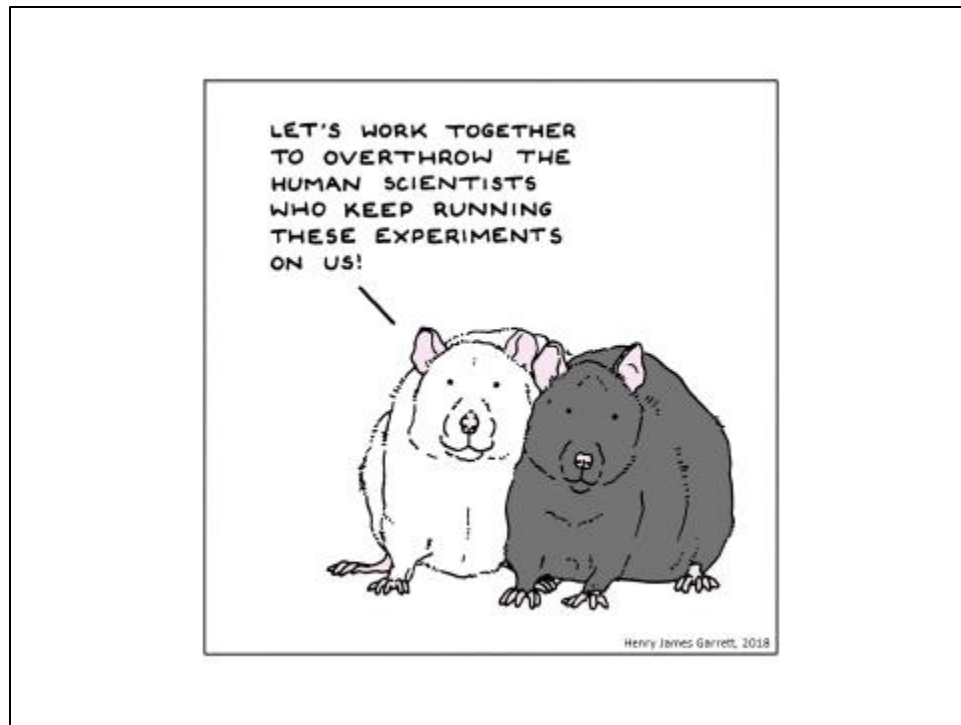
Attracting and Cultivating a New More Diverse Generation of Empathetic Leaders

How, then, do we attract and cultivate a new more fully diverse generation of empathetic leaders while being transparent about how challenging achieving some nuanced unity can be in these contested times? As we move forward on this challenging talent cultivation agenda, I see the glass as both half full and half empty, but then I am a defensive pessimist, seeing what can go wrong but working assiduously to get it to go right. So, starting with the half empty glass, not only haven’t we seen as much progress in diversifying the leadership of higher education (along any number of dimensions of difference) as we might have expected from the many institutional commitments over the last several decades, but even more important is the slow pace of institutional transformation – we really haven’t reset our tables (pursuing more often an “exceptional child” strategy of faculty diversity, for example, rather than a “critical mass” one that might produce a more fulsome pool of potential leaders). Or, to say it differently, as my colleague Nancy DiTomaso does in her articles on diversity or lack thereof in the business world, while we may have gotten in check our biases against diverse candidates, we don’t show much assertiveness in operationalizing biases for them either.²⁷

On the other hand, the glass is, in my view, also half full, as I see a whole cadre of energized new faculty (and pipelines of undergraduate and graduate students) very much committed to the academy serving the public good, being engaged collaboratively in high impact scholarship in communities, determined not to check their identities at the door of the university, but also practicing a more intersectional and inherently empathetic approach to working across difference. The task, then, in reconciling the slow pace of actual change in the leadership map with the potential interest of this new generation in having impact, is to figure out how we attract and nurture these potential change agents to do what we all acknowledge can be sometimes punishing leadership roles. How do we convey in deeds as much as in words that we want to broaden the voices that matter, normalize the outside-in perspective with incentives for collaboration, for publicly-engaged scholarship, and accelerate the pace of change, perhaps disrupting the agonizingly slow climbing of the linear ladder of “required” leadership experience? Are we ready to transform our “received wisdom” about what would prepare a candidate for successful (though not always winning) leadership? That will be a tall order, involving not just isolated leadership development programs – as helpful as those can be in creating new social capital networks for and amongst up and coming faculty leaders – but also transformation of the institutional context, norms, evaluation practices for leadership as well. For example, I suspect that the whole enterprise of higher education leadership would be more

²⁷ Nancy DiTomaso, Racism and Discrimination versus Advantage and Favoritism: Bias for Versus Bias Against, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 35 (2015), 57-77.

appealing if we find ways to focus on collaborative leadership teams – how to build and sustain them both to push forward a vision and agenda and frankly to constitute support networks for advice and protection. Isn't it time we stop lionizing the lone leader who either sinks or swims by dint of skill, character, talent – or more likely, luck?



So, returning to the empathetic rat one last time, just think how effective it would be to have a whole collection of rats to collectively experience other strains and open the trap doors, together.