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Moving Beyond Representation: Reimagining Diversity and Inclusion Efforts in the Aviation Industry

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According to the Federal Aviation Administration’s Civil Airmen Statistics, the number of women who hold an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) Certificate remains low. The numbers of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other minoritized individuals remain challenging to identify. Given these numbers, the response on the part of the aviation industry has been to leverage marketing campaigns, particularly around the affinity months of February, March, and June (Black History, Women’s History, and Pride month) to perform their support with articles and initiatives like “the first all LGBTQ flight crew,” or the first “Black female captain.” Despite this work, aviation remains a challenging industry to enter. This position paper asserts that in order for the aviation industry to truly move forward in its diversity and inclusion efforts, then conscientious reflection on the experiences of minoritized individuals is necessary. To do that, we can look to Black feminist and anti-racist scholarship to better understand the ways in which it is imperative that aviation move beyond representation; towards the kind of transformational change that would enhance the industry.

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Diversity and inclusion proponents and practitioners in the United States of America have placed a high value on trying to understand why the numbers of underrepresented individuals remain low in various industries. This is no less true when thinking about the actions of the aviation industry. Sara Ahmed (2012) writes “In the diversity world, there is a great deal of investment in images” (pg. 33). Imagery here is understood as an action that organizations can take to show support for diversity and inclusion. Ahmed argues that by investing in images, organizations can appear to be supportive of diversity and inclusion without having to make substantive changes that would eliminate or drastically reduce the obstacles that exist for minoritized individuals. Focusing on imagery and representation has the added consequence of reinforcing a particular kind of narrative about people who have been minoritized, the belief that their underrepresentation is directly tied to the fact that they do not represent the “norm” (Walcott 2018, Ahmed 2012). In other words, images offer the possibility of maintaining the status quo while also seemingly welcoming diversity. Imagery is important for institutions as it creates the opportunity to make minoritized individuals both invisible and hypervisible. They become hypervisible at the hands of industry when they are needed to demonstrate success at becoming more inclusive, but are yet invisible when organizations continue to ignore the experiences of these individuals which can be in direct juxtaposition of the claim that inclusivity has been achieved.

The Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Civil Airmen Statistics (2020) indicate that, of those who hold an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) Certificate, a certification necessary to fly for a commercial airline, only a little over 4% are women. Lutte (2019) demonstrates that pilots are not the only profession in aviation where women are underrepresented. Women still represent less than 5% of maintenance technicians and executive leadership roles (e.g. Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, etc.). Women also represent less than 20% of dispatchers, aerospace engineers, airport managers, and air traffic controllers. According to an article published by Kaji, Luna, and Sweeney (2020) on ABC News, less than 1% of pilots are Black women, the numbers of LGBTQIA, Latinx, Indigenous, and other people of color is not as readily available. Given the low numbers of diverse representation, aviation is not unlike other industries in its response to calls for creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

The challenge that aviation faces, like most other industries, is to move past the acknowledgement of the need for a more diverse and inclusive workforce, into actions that lessen the barriers, and create, not just opportunities, but access. The ways in which the industry currently responds to the call for more diversity and inclusion, is through their marketing and human resources strategies, which are more often than not focused on changing or increasing the representation within the organization. Less often considered, are conversations about how the organization itself is moving past representation alone and towards dialogues about how policies and procedures maintain racism and other socially unjust practices.

One of the best examples of this can be found in the kinds of marketing that occur during the various affinity months of February (Black History Month), March (Women’s History

Month), and June (Pride Month). Take for example, the American Airlines article describing the first all-LGBTQ flight crew to operate an American flight that occurred in June 2019. It was an article which featured the individuals operating the flight and contextualized their position in the industry against the backdrop of the struggle for LGBTQIA rights. Articles like this play an important role in demonstrating the importance of a diverse culture in the airlines, however, this flight alone is not what will change the numbers of LGBTQIA individuals who are pursuing careers in the industry.

Another example of this can be seen with an article that was published by Solomon (2017) on Delta's website in February 2017. Captain Johnson is Delta Air Lines' first Black female captain for the company, a ground-breaking achievement for her. What the Delta article does not describe is how Captain Johnson was upgraded to captain after spending years working as a First Officer, a path which is not particularly unique. Captain Johnson was formerly with Northwest Airlines, which was acquired by Delta in 2008. As part of that merger, Northwest pilots became a part of the Delta team. The result of an article like this, is that Captain Johnson becomes both hypervisible and invisible. Evans (2013) describes this as:

Hypervisibility is to be observed (and pointed out) as an anomaly, consistent with being on display. Invisibility works in an opposite way-to be invisible is to experience the visceral reaction of being rendered to a position of subordinate status. (pg. 13).

In other words, Delta was able to make Captain Johnson hypervisible; using her success and hard work as their yard stick for successfully supporting diversity and inclusion efforts. However, her promotion to captain was not the result of any institutional or organizational change that Delta had to make, it was the result of a seniority-based system that had been in existence for years. Delta was able to claim Captain Johnson as a success story without having to investigate the organization's climate and culture which made her the first. Evans (2013) furthers this point, writing:

To be white-washed in order to fit into a corporate culture and survive in the industry is indicative of the daily struggles of going to work and performing a job in which black identity and subsequent labor is not respected. (pg. 121)

This is the challenge of an industry that continues to use representation as its primary benchmark for success in diversity and inclusion. Walcott (2018) writes, "The performative non-performativity of reproducing whiteness is skilled at writing policy and negligent at implementing it, all the while making claims of being committed to doing otherwise" (pg. 88) Diversity that focuses on representation becomes about the performance of support without the substantive work of transforming policies and institutions.

Building on the work of Ahmed, Walcott, and others, I argue that this overreliance on representation in the field of aviation has been detrimental to creating more inclusive and equitable spaces. The overreliance on increasing the representation of minoritized individuals ignores the imperative to evaluate, or provide a critical analysis, of white normativity and systemic inequality in academic and industry institutions. While diversity and inclusion efforts have the potential to provide strategies for institutions, if they do not move beyond thinking

about representation it does little to alter the systemic racial, gender, and class inequality that remains pervasive in academic and industry institutions. I suggest that a clear articulation of anti-racist ideas on the part of aviation educators and industry, will also have the unintended consequence of attracting and retaining more minoritized individuals to the field. If the focus shifted from representation to a robust reflection on culture and climate, institution, and educational spaces (and workspaces), it will ultimately become transformative for all.

Diversity Idolized

What makes focusing on representation so appealing to individuals and organizations? In thinking about how organizations respond to calls for diversity, there is typically an imperative to treat these topics as ideals. Or ways of defining institutions who wish to see themselves, and have others view them as progressive. Bell and Hartmann (2007) call this dedication to idealism, 'happy talk.' They write:

It is not just that Americans are talking about diversity that is extraordinary; it is how they are talking about it: extolling the virtues of difference, celebrating diversity as a value in itself, and describing diversity as the new cornerstone of American idealism. (p.895)

American institutions, including higher education institutions, find themselves celebrating diversity for the sake of diversity. There is rarely, if any, critical reflection on why diversity is needed in the first place. In fact, Bell and Hartmann found in their study that participants had a superficial definition of diversity, most often citing 'difference,' and the idea that America was a 'melting-pot.' However, what participants struggled with was maintaining that optimism when it came to actually implementing or practicing diversity and inclusion efforts. The authors wrote "the 'fun' of diversity is difficult to specify because it is undercut by the frustrations of actually dealing with difference" (p. 900). Study participants expressed concern over fragmentation and cultural unity, demonstrating that diversity discourse, frequently does not include discussion about equity. Their findings suggest that as diversity discussions within organizations are often romanticized, the more challenging conversations around racism, sexism, and policies that maintain white supremacy are less likely to occur.

Brayboy (2003) reinforces this idea that the implementation of diversity is problematic at best and harmful at its worst. He, like Ahmed and others, recognizes that the work of diversity is often left to people of color to create, implement, and sustain. In other words, they are called upon to be the 'cheerleaders' of diversity in an effort to make an organization appear as though it has bought in. Brayboy (2003) writes:

White institutions of higher education often view diversity as a free-standing policy, and the way that diversity is something that can be implemented without necessarily changing the underlying structure of institutions and its day-to-day operations. Institutions figure, for example, that they can merely offer new courses on diversity, hire a few faculty of color, assign these faculty to cover committee assignments, work with students of color, serve as role models, and offer helpful suggestions on how to be a more user-friendly institution to all the students, including the ones of color. (pg. 73)

Brayboy articulates what many others have criticized about diversity and inclusion initiatives: that they are often more akin to window dressing than actual substantive change. He goes on to further his analogy, comparing diversity policy to a library, essentially the same place it has always been, designed to serve the same people. While Brayboy may have directed his attention specifically to higher education, similarities could be drawn to the aviation industry. Emphasis on hiring Chief Diversity Officers, creating employee resource groups, and leveraging the affinity months for marketing make the lives of those who have always been a part of aviation easier, but it does little to change the culture such that more minoritized individuals have access.

Ahmed (2012) ultimately concludes that “diversity can be a method of protecting whiteness” (p. 147). Ahmed comes to this conclusion by the ways in which diversity and diversity work are deployed at higher education institutions. She describes how diversity and inclusion work are used as a method for maintaining what she calls ‘white normativity,’ or the concept that whiteness is the status quo. Diversity initiatives and strategies at higher education institutions often act as a call to action, solidified with an action plan that is pointed to as evidence that the institution is doing something about diversity and inclusion. She continues, “Organizational pride can take the form of diversity pride. Diversity as public relations can thus be mobilized in defense of an organization and its reputation” (pg. 144). In other words, when someone accuses an individual or program within the institution of being racist (for example) it is much easier to deny the experience or claim it is nonexistent.

The Current Climate for Minoritized Individuals in Aviation

When diversity, as a practice, becomes idolized by people and organizations, it begins to limit the kind and amount of change it can effect. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) found that women constitute half of the workforce in most developed nations. However, as Yanıkoğlu, Kılıç, and Küçükönel (2020) note, women are underrepresented in fields that have been traditionally coded or dominated by men. They found that this was in part due to workplace discrimination, but also due to stereotypes that evolve as a particular kind of job becomes coded as male or female. They (2020) write: “women in the aviation industry believe that they need to work harder and demonstrate a higher standard of work within their career field to be accepted and appreciated by their male co-workers” (pg. 3). Their findings suggest that female pilots, who experience gender discrimination in the workforce, are more likely to face a higher psychological burden that ultimately impacts behavior and performance. Davey and Davidson (2000) received similar responses through their research on the experiences of female pilots. They argue that women in aviation have had to adapt themselves to a male-dominated culture and are less likely to challenge the system in order to survive and maintain their careers. This perception of the obstacles to being successful (in this particular career) have the potential to maintain barriers to accessing the industry.

Evans (2013) identifies something similar after interviewing Black pilots and flight attendants about their experiences working in the aviation industry. Evans suggests that there is an increase in the amount of emotional labor that these individuals experience when working their jobs. She writes:

Emotional labor is therefore multidimensional in that labor by people of color, in this historically white industry, is both gendered and raced; it is performed within the context of work as well as within the context of relationship management, all within an inescapable environment. (pg. 11)

Evans describes a kind of emotional labor that is part of the everyday experiences of Black people in the aviation industry. Through her numerous interviews, Evans found that companies may express support for diversity and inclusion, but that the reality is that they were nowhere near creating an inclusive and equitable environment. In this case she writes “diversity, as defined in theory and practice, are not synonymous with equality” (pg. 128). Evans reinforces here the primary challenges presented to diversity and inclusion efforts within the aviation industry; or the belief that focusing on changing the representation alone is going to be the solution to a challenge that continues to persist. Evans and Feagin (2012) further recount the ways in which African Americans face continued discrimination, despite the efforts that the aviation industry has made to suggest otherwise with their marketing campaigns (aforementioned Delta article, American article). They write, “The deeply held belief in racial equality rescues most whites by denying their participation in contemporary racism and racial oppression” (pg. 652). Evans and Feagin were able to interview a number of African American pilots and flight attendants who were able to share their experiences working in the industry. These individuals regularly expressed instances where co-workers or passengers demonstrated outright racism, ultimately creating an additional burden and emotional labor that the individuals become responsible for managing.

By acknowledging the experiences of these individuals, we come to find that the diversity and inclusion the industry wishes to present, through marketing strategies and imagery, differ greatly from one another. Despite the existence of organizations like the National Gay Pilots Association (NGPA), Women in Aviation, International (WAI), the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP), and the creation of a Women in Aviation Advisory Board by the Federal Aviation Administration, there has not been a significant alteration in the actual representation of minoritized individuals in the industry. Reflecting on the work of Evans and Feagin and others suggests that the problem of underrepresentation in the industry cannot be solved by increasing that representation alone. While the focus of the industry remains on increasing the numbers of people who have historically been underrepresented, it does not directly address the challenges and the experiences of those who are minoritized.

This notion of protecting ‘whiteness’ and maintaining anti-blackness at institutions is supported by Walcott (2018), who argues that diversity work often obscures racist or anti-black rhetoric, “The work of diversity can often obscure anti-blackness and the impenetrable structures that continually produce Black peoples as out of place, as things, and as non-human” (pg. 90). It is evident that, however valued some may think diversity and inclusion efforts are, there is also a risk that it will continue to perpetuate white normativity, racist practices and policies, and anti-justice oriented climates. Walcott, as others have suggested, is critical of the ability of diversity and inclusion efforts to create and sustain work environments that are equitable and socially just. He ultimately argues that this is not possible with such efforts as the default position is to sustain current institutional practices that have prevented minoritized individuals from entering in the first place.

Aviation Education

The focus on changing the representation to attract and retain more minoritized individuals can also be found at the collegiate level within aviation higher education, and STEM (science, engineering, technology, and math) fields more broadly. Halleran (2019) recognizes the low numbers of women represented throughout the industry and argues for continued efforts in outreach and mentoring programs that encourage young women to pursue careers in the aviation industry. This is a position that most in STEM academic fields take when it comes to increasing the numbers of students who have been underrepresented by the field. What is most common within higher education institutions are the efforts to increase the programming in support of marginalized or underrepresented students, underscoring questions as to why they are not being represented in the research that is being conducted within STEM fields. Tomasko, Ridgway, Waller, and Olesik (2016) looked at the participation of underrepresented minorities (specifically Hispanic, African American, and Native American), first-generation students, and females in a six-week bridge program that occurred prior to their enrollment in a land-grant, research institution. What the study found was that participation in this program was statistically significant for retention to major (out to the students' third year) for African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and females. The findings were, on the other hand, not statistically significant for first-generation students. The primary finding from this study was that students needed both a sense of belonging and academic support structures in order to persist in STEM. Their conclusion was that programming directed at underrepresented groups needed to address the student holistically, and not just provide academic support structures. What this study unknowingly identified was the need for academic programs to reflect more critically on the underlying reasons why their programs may not have historically fostered inclusive environments. This kind of analysis transitions efforts from being solely about representation into ones that evaluate institutional structures that have maintained barriers to entry.

Kim and Albelo (2020) conducted a qualitative study that gathered information on the experiences of female aviation students in order to better understand their barriers to success. Their findings suggest that female collegiate students looked for communication, community, and positive relationships with faculty. Their work begins to move the conversation around simply questions of increasing numbers and into an evaluation of the experiences of women. In fact, their recommendations did not rely on programming for recruitment, so much as they were designed to address the concerns that were raised by the women's experiences. This is what Pawley (2017) argues creates an inclusive practice. Moving past programming, for Pawley, means questioning the degree to which researchers still rely on white male students for subjects, and feel obligated to defend the inclusion of underrepresented students. Her calls to reimagine research in engineering education resonate with the work of Kim and Albelo (2020) where more work needs to be done to better understand the experiences of minoritized individuals in order to create and promote solutions to the problems of representation.

Some researchers are beginning to rethink their methodologies when it comes to evaluating and analyzing the experiences of minoritized students. Secules, Gupta, Elby and Tanu (2018) demonstrated how an innovative approach to research might be fruitful. The authors relied on black feminist scholar and educator bell hooks to provide a way of theorizing and articulating the experiences of a marginalized student. The stated purpose of their research is to

apply “scholarship from critical theory and narrative as a new resource for approaching and understanding the process of supporting marginalized student agency” (p. 186). The authors understood that their particular research into underrepresented students necessitated a different approach to theorizing about the connections between student experiences in engineering and mentorship programs. In other words, there was a sense that the work they were doing was in consideration of the students and not merely that they represented a marginalized group.

However, while Secules, Gupta, Elby and Tanu (2018) used black feminist scholar bell hooks to create space and opportunity for students who have traditionally been marginalized by the field of engineering education to share their experiences, they were still unable to move beyond their primary argument that representation is imperative to changing the ways in which research is conducted in the field. Their research took the step of finding innovative ways of conducting research with individuals who have been underrepresented, but it didn’t take the step of translating how those experiences reflect the current climate and culture of STEM fields that maintains white normativity. It never moves beyond mere bodies and into more challenging conversations about how and why minoritized individuals fail to show up in research practices or in STEM-based academic programs and careers.

Dismantling the Status Quo: Black Feminism and Anti-Racist Discourse

If, as Ahmed, Walcott, and others suggest, diversity and inclusion efforts are tied to maintaining and sustaining ‘white normativity,’ is there a way of moving forward that achieves the kind of transformation that is sought? What kind of possibility and solutions are there if we begin to move away from representation as being an indicator for success?

One of the places that we might turn to is the research and literature around anti-racism and Black feminist scholarship. In both instances there is a focus on the individual and the value of experience as important to knowledge creation, discourse, and policymaking. In particular, diversity and inclusion advocates and practitioners must understand that not all minoritized individuals experience disadvantage, created by the aviation industry, in the same way. Black feminists have described this as an ‘intersectional approach’ to understanding and articulating the experiences of discrimination experienced by Black women. Crenshaw (1989) writes, “With Black women as the starting point, it becomes more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis” (p. 140). Crenshaw was theorizing about the law and the legal profession in the United States and how Black women are often marginalized in multiple ways because of their identities as both Black and women. She argues that one cannot fully understand or theorize about the lives of marginalized groups without consideration for the intersectional experience. “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (pg. 40). While Crenshaw was speaking from the legal field, Evans (2013) is able to directly connect this theory on intersectionality back to the aviation industry. Her conversations with African American flight attendants demonstrates the ways in which they experience both racism and sexism as a regular part of their work environment from both passengers and colleagues. Evans (2013) writes:

Arguably, most other works on emotional labor often fail to incorporate the multiple ways it is performed throughout the workday. By specifically examining African American pilots and flight attendants, occupations that remain understudied, the more explicit connections between emotional labor performance, and race and gender identity and ideologies clearly show that much emotional labor takes place within complex systems of interaction. (p. 10)

Both scholars stress the importance of articulating and understanding how these experiences impact the ways in which Black women and other women of color experience traditionally white spaces. This kind of (intersectional) understanding of experience is not articulated in articles and pictures that tout the ‘first all-Black flight crew,’ or the first Black female captain at an organization.

While Crenshaw was theorizing specifically about Black women, we can imagine how an intersectional approach might be useful to understanding and articulating the experiences of a variety of underrepresented groups (e.g. LGBTQIA, Latinx, individuals with disabilities, and Indigenous people). Key to using an intersectional approach is the recognition that the experiences of marginalized and underrepresented students are complex and not just the sum of their identities (for example, being queer and Black), but the ways in which individuals can be subjected to what Crenshaw (1989) calls “double-discrimination” (p. 149). Intersectionality is not meant to be an ‘additive’ approach to understanding racism, sexism, discrimination, etc. It is meant to create an opportunity to more fully understand the ways in which, those who have historically been marginalized within an industry, continue to be.

The Role of Controlling Images in Maintaining White Normativity

One of the ways in which we can better understand the experiences of Black women, women of color, and other minoritized individuals, is to better understand how images are used as a controlling force. Ahmed (2012) describes the ways in which institutions have relied on imagery as a means for maintaining the status quo. It creates an opportunity to appear supportive of diversity and inclusion, but does little to make any transformative change that would enable more individuals to have access.

Imagery has long been used as a means of controlling different groups of people. Brooks and Hébert (2006) write, “The racial categories we use to differentiate human difference have been created and changed to meet the dynamic social, political, and economic needs of our society” (pg. 297). In other words, the ways in which we depict and articulate the categories of individuals who are racially different from ourselves, are deeply connected to our political, social, and economic interests. Simms (2001) indicates that there are three specific images of Black women (mammy, Jezebel, and mule) which became an integral part of the discourse which justified the enslavement of Black women and ultimately “contributed substantially to the construction of African women’s gender” (pg. 880).

Collins (2009) furthers the argument that imagery has a long history of being used to control Black women, in what she calls ‘controlling images.’ Collins (2009) writes, “Portraying African-American women as stereotypical mummies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot

mammas helps justify U.S. Black women's oppression. Challenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in Black feminist thought" (pg. 76). Collins articulates the ways in which images often become a narrative which is then used as the basis for which Black women are oppressed. Lindsey (2012) reinforces this narrative by writing "Systems of domination such as American slavery, colonialism, cultural imperialism, and global capitalism produced contexts in which black female bodies became instrumental to configurations of racialized sexual stereotypes. Popular culture and mass media circulation of images of popular culture artists are preeminent sites for the reification of the power of the systems of domination" (pg. 1). While Lindsey may be speaking specifically about what happens with pop culture symbols (Beyoncé, Cardi B, etc.) her argument is applicable to the imagery that the aviation industry leverages in the form of articles like the one Delta produced about its first Black female captain. The end goal of the reaction those images produce may be a little different, but in both situations, Black women and women of color are being made visible, often with little to no reflection on their personal experiences, and frequently leading to situations where the status quo is being maintained.

Ultimately the arguments of Collins, Simms, and others suggest that diversity efforts which focus on representation through imagery ignore the long history, and the ways in which images have been used as a controlling force against Black women and other minoritized individuals. A diversity and inclusion strategy that is based on representation alone, is less likely to encourage and support the kind of conversations and reflection that would produce transformational change within organizations. By failing to have these challenging conversations, the industry may face the consequence that 'whiteness' is reinforced and sustained.

Black feminist scholarship lends itself to the practice of anti-racism. Kendi (2019) writes, "An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences – that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequities" (pg. 21). Kendi makes the case that difference itself is not the problem. The problem is when that translates into what he calls 'racist policies,' or systems and structures designed to oppress people. He further writes "Like fighting an addiction, being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination" (pg. 23). This is where the aviation industry continues to struggle. It rarely seems to challenge itself, to rethink why there is a history of marginalized people in the industry and the ways in which it sustains policies and procedures which prevent minoritized individuals from accessing space.

Conclusions

Suggested here, is not to ignore the reality that there are still groups of individuals who are being underrepresented in the aviation industry, and the importance of representation to the outreach and recruitment of those groups. These efforts are critical to creating a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable aviation industry. However, these efforts alone are not enough to create the kind of change the industry is seeking with its diversity and inclusion efforts. As Evans (2013) suggests:

As people of color and women move into specific industries, their experiences of engaging in emotional labor, arguably based on their racial and gender identity, should be the primary focus of gauging the overall change, or lack thereof, of the general racial and sexist climate. (pg. 11)

For Evans, the solution is clear, more effort needs to be put towards understanding the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, if we hope to create lasting change. Building on the research done by Evans, Ahmed, and others, I argue that focusing on representation alone ignores the important conversations that need to be had around why the aviation industry has been traditionally coded as white and male. The current thinking of diversity and inclusion efforts as a solution to the reasons why the industry remains underrepresented ignores the experiences that are being had by minoritized people in aviation. Focusing on building representation alone does not directly address the challenges that are faced by these groups. Instead, what it does is bring additional individuals into a system that is still struggling to understand how it can become more inclusive and equitable.

As Crenshaw and others have suggested, looking to the experiences of those who have historically been minoritized in the industry, is critical to the industry successfully moving forward in its efforts to diversify and become more inclusive. These experiences can help us further understand how and why whiteness continues to be normalized, and the ways in which this prevents the industry from creating and sustaining a transformational culture of equity and inclusion.

Recognizing the importance and value of representation in changing the industry is only the first step in creating a more equitable work environment. Until we are able to have those challenging conversations that are in direct response to the experiences of minoritized individuals, then the industry will continue to struggle with attracting and retaining diverse talent. Part of the solution is the recognition that diversity efforts focused on representation fail to account for the experiences which suggest that whiteness and maleness are still the predominant feature of the industry. Once we realize the ways in which this maintains barriers to entry and success, then we can then begin to think about the kinds of solutions that would be necessary in order to create a culture and climate that not only recruits, retains, and sustains, but values minoritized individuals.

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