

REVIEW ESSAY

THE MODEL MINORITY AND THE LIMITS OF WORKPLACE INCLUSION

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Although management scholars have conceptualized how diversity manifests in various organizational outcomes, several aspects of diversity remain undertheorized. I examine the model minority—a specific and understudied racialized other. To conceptualize the model minority’s position in the contemporary workplace, I analyze the series *The Chair*. Juxtaposing *The Chair* against germane discourses on the model minority, I consider some of the salient, though not fully understood, challenges to inclusion at work. I develop theoretical insights on how the model minority encounters specific forms of institutional racism that encumber their inclusion in organizations. Namely, I contend that the construction of an organizational member of color as the model minority positions them in (a) double consciousness and (b) the leadership conundrum. Double consciousness refers to the phenomenon wherein the model minority is subjected to latent or overt institutional racism while simultaneously being pressured to remain within the restrictive parameters of the model minority stereotype. The leadership conundrum refers to how the model minority is cast with expectations to behave in ways not expected of White colleagues occupying the same role, which ultimately sets up the model minority leader for failure. This article contributes to ongoing debates in critical diversity studies on the limits of workplace inclusion.

When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to the processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice.

(hooks, 1994: 61)

It is well documented that the conditions of globalization fundamentally transformed the nature of labor markets. One pivotal transformation engendered by globalization rendered labor markets

more demographically diverse (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2019; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994). In the last several decades, numerous management scholars have sought to conceptualize the intraorganizational dynamics of workplaces with increasingly demographically diverse employees (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Prasad, Pringle, & Konrad, 2006; Roberson, 2019). Among other things, the corpus of this research has advanced the field’s understanding of how various social categories of difference—such as gender (Berdahl, 2007;

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metrics in business schools were first presented as part of my keynote address at the 10th International Doctoral Consortium in June 2021. Likewise, some early ideas on institutional racism in academia were originally presented as part of my CMS special edition plenary address (an invited panel I shared alongside Alison Pullen and Patrizia Zanon) at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in August 2021. An earlier draft of this manuscript was presented at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in August 2022. Finally, research support from the Canada Research Chairs program and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is gratefully acknowledged, although it is perhaps the grants that I did not receive that were more instrumental in motivating this article.

Rivera, 2017), race (Nkomo, 1992; Ulus, 2015), sexual identity (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Fleming, 2007), age (Thomas, Hardy, Cutcher, & Ainsworth, 2014; White, Burns, & Conlon, 2018), religion (Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay, & Markel, 2013; Heliot, Gleibs, Coyle, Rousseau, & Rojon, 2020), and caste (Chrispal, Bapuji, & Zietsma, 2021; Mair, Wolf, & See-los, 2016; Zulfiqar & Prasad, 2022)—materialize into salient organizational outcomes.

Even with the longstanding and earnest interest among scholars in management as well as in cognately related fields on unraveling the relationship between diversity and organizational outcomes, one thing remains clear: diversity is a complex phenomenon. If meaningful inclusion is to be realized, it is important to study the nuances that may exist within any particular social category of difference. This point is consistent with an observation made by Stella Nkomo and colleagues (2019: 498) in a recent editorial published in this journal: “significant changes in national and global contexts for the study of diversity in organizations [requires] new theorizing” (also see Roberson, 2017). Heeding this call, in this article I examine and develop theoretical insights on the experiences of the *model minority*—a specific and understudied racialized other—in the contemporary workplace.

Before proceeding, it is important to define the central concept that foregrounds this article: the model minority. The model minority, as an analytical concept, gained currency from the 1960s onwards (Osajima, 2005). It was originally ascribed to Asian Americans (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Lee, 1996)—those individuals of certain Asian descent (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) but residing in the United States. In its simplest form, it was used to capture the idea that “Asian Americans through their hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement, have been successful in American society” (Chew as cited in McGowan & Lindgren, 2006: 331). In more recent years, the model minority stereotype has been extended to describe members of other racialized communities in the United States, including members of certain South Asians communities (e.g., Shams, 2020; Shanker, 2008).

It also merits note that the concept of the model minority has evolved from its original meaning. As members of the model minority are perceived to have ascertained objective measures of success in terms of their educational and professional achievements—at rates relatively higher than members of other racialized minority communities—they represent a population that has ostensibly benefited from the prevailing structures and institutions in which they

are located (Ng & Lam, 2020). Or, as some scholars have observed, they benefit from their “proximity to whiteness” (Daly & Shah, 2022). As they are perceived to be net gainers from the set of social and economic systems presently in operation—including the multitude of inequalities embedded within these systems (e.g., Johnson & Betsinger, 2009)—they are deemed not to pose a threat to the existing status quo (Chou & Feagin, 2015). As Wu (2014: 2) summated, the model minority is a member of “a racial group distinct from the white majority, but lauded as well as assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically non-threatening, and *definitely not black*” (emphasis in original). This description suggests that the model minority has vested interests in maintaining the current racial organization of society. Not surprisingly, then, far from subverting the status quo, there is a tacit expectation cast upon the model minority that they will perform only in ways that will reaffirm and thereby legitimate the racial hierarchies currently in place. Given that they are perceived to reaffirm the racial status quo, Ng and Lam (2020: 732) concluded that the model minority is “complicit in perpetuating systemic racism and reinforcing White supremacy.”

To make sense of the position of the model minority in the contemporary workplace, in this article I analyze the Netflix original series, *The Chair* (Peet, Benioff, Weiss, Caulfield, Longino, & Oh, 2021). *The Chair* has acquired wide viewership within the academic community. Its popularity among scholars is understandable given that it offers a revelatory glimpse into the ritualistic power games conspicuous in academic life. Tracing the day-to-day dilemmas associated with negotiating the often competing professional and personal demands of its protagonist, Ji-Yoon Kim, *The Chair* vividly portrays how an academic faculty member’s responsibility to research, teaching, and service are fraught in corrosive incidents of intraorganizational politics. Far from being ideologically neutral, the series illuminates how intraorganizational politics at universities present disproportionate harm to the faculty member of color whose identity is concomitantly burdened with the model minority stereotype. In positing this claim, *The Chair* provides a fictional, though disturbingly accurate, account from which to interrogate the problematic idea of the model minority in today’s academic settings.

Juxtaposing *The Chair* against germane discourses related to the model minority, I consider some of the limits to inclusion in the workplace. Applying my argument to the university setting in particular—the site in which the themes in *The Chair* unfold—I show how the model minority encounters specific

forms of institutional racism that encumber their inclusion in organizations. By institutional racism, I refer to the “collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their color, culture, or ethnic origin”; this collective failure is discernable in the “processes, attitudes and behaviors which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people” (see Griffith et al., 2007: 384). In considering the role of institutional racism in the working life of the model minority, this article contributes to ongoing debates in critical diversity studies from management scholars on the limits of inclusion for certain racialized subjects. It substantiates the assertion that the complexities involved in what it means to be inclusive for an increasingly diverse labor market are neither fully understood nor properly accommodated, and much work remains to be done. Indeed, Kim’s character captures many of the struggles and the challenges experienced by those whose identities are laden with the model minority stereotype and illustrates the troubling consequences for their professional—and personal—lives that emanate therefrom. In so doing, *The Chair* offers a rich source of material from which to analyze the predicaments of the empirically understudied model minority who must negotiate complex and interlocking manifestations of racialized and gendered intraorganizational biases in the workplace.

As indicated, the organizational setting of *The Chair* is academia. While academia—and business schools even more particularly—possesses certain idiosyncratic conditions in terms of its dynamics and its functioning (Billsberry, Kohler, Stratton, Cohen, & Taylor, 2019; Fotaki & Prasad, 2015), the ubiquity of the model minority stereotype in society makes the analysis found in this article largely relevant to organizations found in other industries. Indeed, as some scholars have recently alluded, the consequences associated with the model minority label as encountered in academia mirrors the organizational tensions and penalties to which the model minority has been subjected in the workplace more generally (Daly & Shah, 2022; Mandalaki & Prasad, 2022).

The remainder of this article is presented in four sections. In the first section, I set the definitional boundaries of the model minority. My intent is to demarcate which particular subgroups within the broad Asian American category would rightly fit as the model minority. In the second section, I draw on two discrete themes from *The Chair* to demonstrate how myriad organizational actors collude, both individually and

collectively, in pressuring the protagonist to conform to the role of the model minority. With these themes in the backdrop, I leverage the extant literature on diversity in organizations to contend that the construction of a faculty member of color as a model minority effectively positions them in (a) double consciousness and (b) the leadership conundrum. In the third section, I call on the faculty member of color whose identity is affixed to the model minority stereotype to actively resist yielding to it. I argue that the subversive act of not yielding to the model minority stereotype has the potential to move the project of diversity and inclusion within universities—and elsewhere—from empty rhetoric, as is all too often the case, to meaningful institutional change. I offer three actionable paths by which this objective can be achieved. Finally, in the fourth section, I close this article with some concluding remarks.

WHO IS THE MODEL MINORITY?

The model minority has been the subject of a small but growing number of academic studies in sociology, psychology, and management. When the term has been deployed in scholarly inquiry, authors often used it synonymously with Asian Americans. This is problematic insofar as the imprudent conflation between the model minority and Asian Americans negates the salient differences in the experiences and the access to resources that exist across diverse Asian American subgroups. In this section, I delineate the parameters that define who would reasonably qualify as the model minority. To do so, I rely heavily on the works of sociologists Lee and Zhou (2014, 2015).

In their watershed text, *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*, Lee and Zhou (2015) explained how only certain subgroups within the general “Asian American” category are able to leverage what they term *ethnic capital* to pursue professional and educational achievements for themselves and for their children. Using the Chinese American and Vietnamese American communities as the target population for their study, they demonstrated how ethnic capital endows certain tangible and intangible resources to members of these communities. Tangible resources may include such things as “jobs, housing, and opportunities for self-employment for immigrant adults; and educational resources, such as after-school tutoring, supplementary educational programs, and college preparation classes for children” (Lee & Zhou, 2014: 42). On the other hand, intangible resources include “relevant information to facilitate their children’s educational attainment” (Lee & Zhou, 2014: 42). The key point raised by Lee and Zhou is that these tangible and intangible resources are not

distributed or available evenly across all subgroups that fall within the Asian American category. Indeed, it is this unevenness that determines which Asian American subgroups do or do not fit the model minority category.

Ethnic capital is only sufficient when tangible and intangible resources, which are cultivated by first-generation middle- and upper-class members of an Asian American subgroup, enable members of the second generation of the same subgroup to achieve professional and educational success. Lee and Zhou (2015) contended that high levels of ethnic capital facilitate counteracting low socioeconomic status; that is, robust ethnic capital allows for the exercise of tangible and intangible resources which enable professional and educational success even when a particular individual or family of that ethnic background is of low socioeconomic status. So, for instance, Chinese American parents of low socioeconomic status can leverage tangible and intangible resources proffered to them by ethnic capital—owing to their Chinese ethnicity—to increase the likelihood of their children gaining admission into top universities. Admission into such universities would then increase their children’s likelihood of securing jobs in desired professions. Thus, while originally coming from a low socioeconomic status, ensuring that their children possess degrees from the right universities and that they work in the right professions raises their social and economic standing in the community going forward. In sum, the model minority engages in a series of intentional acts to achieve upward mobility.

In this article, I follow Lee and Zhou’s analysis to define the model minority as members of those Asian American subgroups who have access to high levels of ethnic capital and, concomitantly, the tangible and the intangible resources that this ethnic capital bestows. While Lee and Zhou studied the Asian American model minority of Chinese and Vietnamese ethnicities, using the criteria they outlined, this classification can logically be extended to those of Korean ethnicity—such as the protagonist in *The Chair*.

Lee and Zhou (2015) have been careful not to overly romanticize the idea of the model minority. They identified a set of psychological consequences imposed on the subjectivity of those individuals who come from Asian American subgroups and qualify as a model minority but have not yet individually achieved its lofty expectations for professional and educational success, such as obtaining employment in certain valued professions (e.g., law and medicine) or graduating from an Ivy League (or equivalent) university. Through in-depth qualitative

interviews with research participants whose ethnicity labels them the model minority but who otherwise lack the desired markers of model minority success, Lee and Zhou illustrated the consequences for individuals who have failed to meet or exceed the expectations of the stereotype. As they showed, such individuals (a) develop an inferiority complex as they constantly compare themselves to their stereotyped “coethnic” model minority or (b) disidentify with their ethnicity altogether.

Lee and Zhou’s account of the detrimental outcomes that the model minority label yields has been crucial insofar as it has acknowledged how embedded within the social construction of the model minority are consequences that must be borne by those who have the label foisted upon them. While Lee and Zhou focused mainly on the consequences found at the level of individual psychology (i.e., the development of the inferiority complex and the disidentification with one’s own ethnic community), *The Chair* offers novel insights into how the model minority is positioned within the contemporary workplace and the intraorganizational dilemmas that they are left to maneuver. I now turn to analyze *The Chair* with the intent to conceptualize some of the challenges and the limitations that the experiences of the model minority pose to workplace inclusion.

WATCHING THE MODEL MINORITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Given that the model minority simultaneously encounters the consequences (racial markers) and the privileges (ethnic capital) stemming from the prevailing systems of institutional racism, their multifaceted experiences are not easily discernable empirically. Perhaps for this reason, the model minority has been an understudied population among management researchers. Indeed, much of what is currently known about the implications and the outcomes extending from the model minority stereotype has come from social psychologists who have mainly demonstrated how this stereotype impacts the educational development of youth from various Asian American communities (e.g., Atkin, Yoo, Jager, & Yeh, 2018; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007).

The Chair provides a fictional account through which to conceptualize some of the experiences with institutional racism that the model minority is subjected to in the workplace. In this section, I take inspiration from recent calls by critical management studies scholars to *write differently* (Gilmore, Harding, Helin, & Pullen, 2019; Mandalaki & Perezts,

2022; Perezts, 2022; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015) to analyze the series.¹ In doing so, I present two themes related to the model minority that are palpable in *The Chair*: (a) the model minority and double consciousness and (b) the model minority and the leadership conundrum. While the series is replete with examples of how the behavior of the model minority is stringently governed by a plethora of organizational practices, the two themes on which I will focus reveal the different tactics adopted by organizational actors in order to deny the model minority's substantive inclusion in the workplace.

Before continuing, two caveats should be noted. First, some of the discussion on the two themes will, admittedly, be applicable to other socially disenfranchised members of the organization who would not, by occupying a specific disenfranchising designation alone (e.g., a minority race), be classified as a model minority. However, as studies on discrimination in the workplace have suggested, different minority groups will be affected by different magnitudes of bias and exclusion in organizations (Auster & Prasad, 2016; Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). Indeed, extant research theoretically informed by intersectionality has found that the form and the extent of the intraorganizational bias encountered by different socially disenfranchised groups is asymmetrically experienced (Hendricks, Deal, Mills, & Mills, 2020; Rosette, de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018; Settles & Buchanan, 2014). As such, while understanding that parts of the discussion in this section may apply to members of socially disenfranchised groups regardless of their model minority status, *The Chair* offers significant insights into how double consciousness and the leadership conundrum materialize idiosyncratically for the model minority.

Second, it is important to recognize that given that the protagonist is not only a model minority but also a woman—thus, a woman of color—the tropes of

discrimination encountered by her in the workplace are the corollary of intersecting racial and gender biases (Cortina, 2008; Rosette et al., 2018). As extant management research has found, women of color are especially susceptible to being victimized by institutionalized systems that are simultaneously predicated on, and hence privilege, whiteness and androcentric values (Cortina, 2008; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). In fact, Berdahl and Moore (2006) concluded that women of color encounter compounded forms of workplace discrimination as they concurrently embody marginalized social identities along the fault lines of both race and gender. As such, the forthcoming analysis on the institutional racism directed toward the series' protagonist cannot be solely attributed to her model minority status. Rather, it is being a model minority *and* a woman that mutually enable the problematic consequences discussed in the remainder of this section.

Table 1 provides a list of characters in the series to whom I will refer, as well as the relevant demographical details of the actors who portrayed them. While the ethnic and racial backgrounds for the majority of the characters are not explicitly revealed to the viewer, background details about the actors who portrayed them do offer some indication of the demographic groups the characters are suggestive of representing in the series.

Theme 1—The Model Minority and Double Consciousness

Theme 1 reveals how the model minority experiences double consciousness (Chou & Feagin, 2015), which is the phenomenon of being subjected to latent or overt forms of institutional racism while at the same time being pressured to conform to the restrictive parameters of the model minority stereotype. In the series, this theme is evidenced by: (a) the limited scope of actions available to the model minority, (b) the negation of the model minority's achievements, and (c) the microaggressions directed toward the model minority. These phenomena, individually and collectively, represent why the model minority must navigate competing pressures coming from institutional racism and a prescriptive stereotype (Berdahl & Min, 2012). Table 2 provides a description of illustrative scenes from the series that substantiates the manifestation of double consciousness in its model minority character.

Limited scope of actions. *The Chair* illuminates how the scope of actions—that is, the things someone can get away with—available to the model

¹ "Writing differently" represents a growing intellectual movement among critical management studies scholars to recognize and to repudiate the ways in which scholarly research is both written and validated. This movement seeks to expand what is written about (e.g., the research questions asked and the phenomena studied) as well as how it is written (e.g., the format adopted to structure a study and the empirical content used to substantiate its findings). Ultimately, writing differently seeks to destabilize the orthodoxy of conventional writing practices, which, among other things, is predicated on the Cartesian assumption that knowledge is separable from experience (Phillips, Pullen, & Rhodes, 2014; Segarra & Prasad, 2018).

TABLE 1
List of Actors

Character	Actor	Actor Demographics
Ji-Yoon Kim (department chair)	Sandra Oh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian born • Korean background • Visibly Asian
Bill Dobson (tenured full professor)	Jay Duplass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Visibly White
Yasmin “Yaz” McKay (tenure-track assistant professor)	Nana Mensah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Ghanaian background • Visibly Black
Lila (graduate student)	Mallory Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino background • Visibly Asian
Elliott Rentz (tenured full professor)	Bob Balaban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Russian, German, and Romanian background • Visibly White
Joan Hambling (tenured associate professor)	Holland Taylor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Background unknown • Visibly White
Paul Larson (dean)	David Morse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Background unknown • Visibly White
John McHale (tenured full professor)	Ron Crawford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Background unknown • Visibly White
Peter Seung (academic and Kim’s former romantic partner)	Daniel Dae Kim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korean born • Visibly Asian
David Duchovny (invited distinguished lecturer)	David Duchovny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American born • Scottish, Polish, and Russian background • Visibly White

minority is far more constrained relative to their White peers (Zapata, Carton, & Liu, 2016). Applying this phenomenon to the Asian American experience, Berdahl and Min (2012) found that due to the enactment of a set of prescriptive stereotypes—namely codified assumptions about how racial groups ought to be in terms of behavioral attributes—Asian Americans have access to an especially limited scope of actions that are deemed acceptable in the workplace. Should they exhibit actions or behaviors that contravene these prescriptive stereotypes, they encounter punitive organizational and interpersonal consequences (Berdahl & Min, 2012). These consequences are intended to bring the model minority back into line and, concomitantly, to warn other model minorities in the organization against expressing subversive behaviors.

The most compelling evidence of the limited scope of actions available to the model minority appears in the series when juxtaposing the behavioral patterns exhibited by the current department chair, Ji-Yoon Kim, against those of the previous department chair (and Kim’s potential love interest), Bill Dobson. In the

case of Dobson, among other things, he fails to prepare his course syllabus in advance of the semester; attends class hungover, unprepared, and tardy; accidentally shows a video with nudity to the students in his class; accepts rides from his female students; and smokes marijuana on campus. By contrast, Kim’s comportment is expected to meet the highest expectations of professional decorum—a behavioral trend that she steadfastly exhibits throughout the series. She is depicted as being punctual, attentive, and a good organizational citizen. For instance, when her attendance at an evening faculty social is expected, Kim reorganizes the responsibilities in her personal life—and specifically goes to great lengths to find childcare on short notice for her young daughter Ju Ju—to be able to accommodate the event. Although it is apparent that she would prefer not to be at the faculty social, she acquiesces to workplace pressures and attends.

Additional evidence of the differential scope of actions available to Kim versus Dobson is discernable in how they each respond to authority figures, namely Dean Larson. When Dobson is first admonished by

TABLE 2
Double Consciousness

Theme	Illustrative Scenes
Limited scope of actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When relations are about to turn intimate between Kim and Dobson, Kim stops the encounter by telling Dobson: “if we got together, no one [at the university] is gonna take me seriously.” • While Dobson (previous department chair) fails to prepare his course syllabus in advance; attends class hungover, unprepared, and tardy; accidentally shows a video with nudity to the students in his class; accepts rides from his female students; and smokes marijuana on campus, Kim is expected to demonstrate professional decorum (i.e., be punctual, attentive, and a good organizational citizen). • While Kim is expected to toe the administration’s line when it comes to handling Dobson’s classroom controversy, Dobson has no reservations in standing up for himself. When pressured by Dean Larson to issue a written apology to the university community, Dobson rejects the idea declaring: “I’m tenured. You can’t constrain my actions in my own classroom or my speech on this campus.” • When Kim’s attendance at an evening faculty social is expected, she reorganizes the responsibilities in her personal life to be able to accommodate the event, although it is apparent that she would prefer not to be there. • Kim acquiesces to the dean at every turn, even when she wholly disagrees with him. At the behest of the dean, she rescinds the distinguished lectureship from McKay; she retrieves Dobson’s class notes to give to David Duchovny, and she signs a letter to inform Dobson that the university will be pursuing proceedings to dismiss him with cause. • Kim realizes she is yielding to Dean Larson’s pressure to appoint Duchovny to the distinguished lectureship, a position for which he is wholly unqualified. • Kim acquiesces to pressures from Dean Larson to sign a letter to start the process to terminate Dobson from the university although she obviously does not believe this to be the right course of disciplinary action.
Negation of achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean Larson shuts down Kim when she raises the possibility of awarding McKay the distinguished lectureship. • At the inaugural department meeting that Kim convenes as chair, McHale refers to her as “our first lady chair.” • Kim attributes the primary reason for the breakdown of her relationship with former partner Peter Seung (a Korean American male academic) to the fact that when Seung received a position at Michigan, the school made Kim an uncompetitive offer under the spousal hire program wherein she would have had to deliver a 4/4 teaching load. • When Kim asks Rentz whether he looked at the suggested reviewers for McKay’s tenure file, Rentz visibly yawns and dismisses Kim’s question. • Rentz refers to Kim as “kiddo.” • Duchovny squabbles with Kim about the pronunciation of certain words (though Kim is correct) and mockingly tells Kim: “Maybe you chose the wrong department [English]. Maybe you’re better suited for the schiences.”
Microaggressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim reflects, “when I got here [Pembroke], it was like, why is some Asian lady teaching Emily Dickinson?” • Dean Larson places his arm around Kim’s shoulder during a conversation at the faculty social, making Kim feel visibly uncomfortable, although she does not verbally object. • Kim reflects that she and Dobson started at Pembroke in tenure-track positions at the same time. During their early years at Pembroke, Rentz would invite Dobson over to his home for dinner but not extend any such invitation to Kim. • Kim is exhorted by Dean Larson that she “need[s] to start taking her role [department chair] here more seriously.”

Larson about students being in an uproar over him supposedly being a Nazi sympathizer—based on certain things that he is accused of saying and doing in class—and Larson demands Dobson issue a written apology to the university community, Dobson not only refuses to express a modicum of contrition but he outright rejects the dean’s directive. Instead, Dobson is quick to invoke his academic freedom by declaring: “I’m tenured. You can’t constrain my

actions in my own classroom or my speech on the campus.” This is in complete contrast to Kim, who the viewer witnesses acquiesce to the dean at every turn, even when she wholly disagrees with him. For example, at the behest of the dean, she rescinds the distinguished lectureship from McKay, retrieves Dobson’s class notes to give to David Duchovny, and signs a letter to inform Dobson of the fact that the university will be pursuing proceedings to dismiss

him with cause. It is quite telling when Kim, not so facetiously, comments: “I serve at the pleasure of the dean.”

Negation of achievements. The model minority encounters the negation of achievements when the organizational roles they assume are not stereotypically associated with the racial—and, as relevant, the gender—categories they occupy. This phenomenon can be explained by ongoing research using intersectionality to make sense of discrimination at work (Hendricks et al., 2020; Jamjoom & Mills, 2022). When it comes to racialized women in key positions, Rosette and colleagues (2016) concluded that the type and the scope of penalties leveled against women workers will be determined by social judgments about their race. In the case of Asian American women specifically, they are portrayed as being “competent but passive” (Rosette et al., 2016: 440). It comes as little surprise that given the focus on competence, Asian American women are particularly vulnerable to being judged critically when their role is not closely or exclusively associated with technical expertise (Berdahl & Min, 2012).

In *The Chair*, there are both implicit and explicit references to the negation of Kim’s achievements. Implicit evidence is found in how Kim attributes the primary reason for the breakdown of her relationship with her former partner Peter Seung (a Korean American male academic). When Seung received a position at Michigan, the school made Kim an uncompetitive offer under the spousal hire program wherein she would have had to deliver a 4/4 teaching load. Such an offer, at least tacitly, minimized her accomplishments and led to her declining the position—a decision which ultimately led to the dissolution of her relationship with Seung. Explicit evidence of the negation of her achievements is found in how Kim is treated by various White individuals in the series. When Kim advises Duchovny that the findings from the research study he pursued for his uncompleted doctoral dissertation had become largely defunct in the decades that have lapsed since he was last in graduate school, Duchovny belittles her over pronunciation. When Kim rightly corrects Duchovny about the pronunciation of the term “prescient,” Duchovny does not accept her correction and mocks her by saying: “I mean, maybe you chose the wrong department [English]. Maybe you’re better suited for the *schiences*.” In this interaction, Kim’s linguistic fluency is received with palpable suspicion and opens her up to belittlement. This is consistent with Sliwa and Johansson’s (2014) and Boussebaa, Sinha, and Gabriel’s (2014) findings that language functions as a

source of organizational power that native speakers exercise to marginalize those who are (perceived as) nonnative speakers. So, even while Kim is a formally trained English professor at an elite liberal arts college—a fact from which we may reasonably infer that she attended the types of elite undergraduate and graduate universities associated with academic “success,” according to the model minority label (see Lee & Zhou, 2015)—her ethnicity, race, and gender, working in tandem, make her susceptible to having her achievements negated for not even an Asian woman who qualifies as a model minority is normally associated with possessing strong English language skills.

Microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007: 271). The insidiousness of microaggressions is found in their “invisibility to the perpetrator,” who does not see how their words or actions serve to demean those who are the targets (Sue, 2010: xv). As a recent study on sex-based harassment has revealed, microaggressions are enacted to ensure the organizational silencing of socially disenfranchised employees (Fernando & Prasad, 2019). Ultimately, microaggressions are a critical element of institutional racism insofar as it functions to regulate people of color and, in the process, maintain the integrity of the existing racial hierarchy. While microaggressions are broadly leveled against disenfranchised racialized minority groups, Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2007) have contended that how these microaggressions are experienced by an individual is dependent upon the racialized minority group to which they belong. When it comes to Asian Americans specifically, they are more likely to encounter microaggressions that result in feelings of being an “‘alien on [their] own land,’ ‘invisibility,’ and ‘invalidation of interethnic differences’” (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Tarino, 2007: 78). More insidiously, for the Asian American model minority, even positive stereotypes often translate into microaggressions. As Kim, Block, and Yu (2021) have recently found, positive stereotypes of Asian Americans prevent individuals from understanding how their views of the group lead to them failing to recognize the forms of subtle racism they harbor or unknowingly express.

Returning to *The Chair*, microaggressions are seen to be deployed to ensure that the model minority does not cross the boundaries of acceptable behavior and, if they were to step outside of those boundaries,

to ensure that they are quickly put back into the place allotted to them. Kim is subjected to various forms of microaggressions from her White male colleagues and superiors. When Kim reflects on her early days at Pembroke University, she recounts several forms of microaggressions she encountered from individuals at the institution. While commiserating with Yazmin McKay in her office about some of the challenges she experienced at Pembroke prior to McKay's hire, Kim recalls: "When I got here [Pembroke], it was like, why is some Asian lady teaching Emily Dickinson?" Such a comment is the corollary of the mutually dependent racist assumptions that: (a) the Western literary canon ought to be delivered by someone who is White and (b) an "Asian lady" is incapable of fully grasping the richness and the depth of Emily Dickinson's writings. On another occasion, Kim reflects that although she and Bill Dobson arrived at Pembroke around the same time, the senior White male professor in the department, Elliott Rentz, would invite Dobson to his home for dinner but would not extend an invitation to her.

In addition to reflections on the past, Kim encounters microaggressions in her day-to-day interpersonal dynamics at the institution. For instance, Larson places his arm around Kim during a conversation at the faculty social, which makes Kim visibly uncomfortable, although she dares not express her discomfort with the situation to Larson. During a later conversation, Kim is exhorted by Dean Larson that she "need[s] to start taking her role [department chair] here more seriously." Such castigations are made even though it is clear that Kim is working diligently as a department chair under very difficult organizational circumstances and often at significant costs to her personal life.

Theme 2—The Model Minority and the Leadership Conundrum

Theme 2 captures how the model minority is situated in a leadership conundrum, which demands of them to resolve the "paradoxical tensions" codified into their roles (Zheng, Surgevil, & Kark, 2018). Namely, they are cast with expectations to behave in ways not expected of their White colleagues occupying the same role. These incongruent expectations set up the model minority leader for failure. This phenomenon is analogous to the idea of the "double bind" as explicated in the extant literature on gender and leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Akin to how the double bind hypothesizes that women leaders are penalized regardless of whether they exhibit highly communal or highly agentic behaviors, so too is the model minority

penalized regardless of whether they behave in ways consistent with their stereotyped cultural identity or behave in ways consistent with the role schema associated with the leadership position they occupy. In the series, the leadership conundrum theme is evidenced by: (a) appointing the model minority in a glass cliff leadership position, (b) encouraging the model minority to exercise soft power, and (c) anticipating that the model minority will demonstrate an ethic of care. Table 3 provides a description of illustrative scenes from the series that disclose the leadership conundrum as faced by its model minority protagonist.

Glass cliff. While there has been an abundance of scholarship substantiating the existence of the glass ceiling, research in the last 15 years has found evidence of a phenomenon labeled the *glass cliff*. The glass cliff refers to the disproportionate number of women who are placed into leadership positions in times of organizational crisis (Bruckmuller & Branscombe, 2010; Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007). As the organization is in crisis during the appointment of the woman leader, she is especially vulnerable to being seen as failing in the leadership position. Some scholars have termed this heightened vulnerability borne by members from marginalized groups who are situated in glass cliff leadership positions as the *risk tax* (Glass & Cook, 2020). It can be surmised that model minority women of color experience this vulnerability even more conspicuously than others—and hence incur a higher risk tax—as they are inflicted with the multiplicative effects of intersecting gender and racial penalties (Berdahl & Moore, 2006).

Kim's appointment as chair of the English department comes at a time when the university is going through, to borrow the words of Dean Larson, "a dire crisis." According to Larson, student enrollment is down in excess of 30% and budgets are being "gutted." As Kim juggles a plethora of obstacles on a daily basis brought on by such circumstances—including being pressured by the administration to reduce her department's faculty count by forcing certain senior, tenured members to retire—she poignantly remarks: "I don't feel I inherited an English department. I feel like someone handed me a ticking time bomb." Taking this metaphor one step further, the viewer sees how it is Kim who is left holding the "time bomb" as it goes off; and, therefore, it is she who is to assume the heftiest repercussions for the organizational "crisis" that follows.

Soft power. Power materializes in a multitude of forms. As past research has explicated, there are discrete differences in the forms of power accessible to members of different groups. For instance, men have

TABLE 3
The Leadership Conundrum

Theme	Illustrative Scenes
Glass cliff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim is appointed department chair during a period of “dire crisis”—student enrollment is down more than 30% and budgets are “gutted.” • Kim wonders aloud: “In five years, do you think we’ll even exist, the English department? I feel like I arrived at the party after last call.” • To try to avoid faculty redundancies in the department, Kim feels compelled to ask McKay to coteach a class with Rentz. • During a dinner at Dean Larson’s home, the decision to award the distinguished lectureship is usurped from Kim, although “historically, that’s been at the chair’s discretion.” It is decided that rather than McKay receiving the honor, as Kim had intended, it will go to David Duchovny. • Dean Larson advises Kim: “You need to start taking your role [department chair] here more seriously.” • Kim remarks to McKay: “I don’t feel like I inherited an English department. I feel like someone handed me a ticking time bomb.” • Even though Kim expended great efforts to protect the jobs of Rentz, Hambling, and McHale, they appeal to Dean Larson to have her removed from her department chair role.
Soft power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During first week of her appointment, Kim is instructed by Dean Larson to use her “persuasive powers” to compel senior tenured members of the department to retire. • When Kim admonishes Dobson for neglecting his teaching commitments, Dobson responds: “When I was chair, I didn’t ride your ass like this.” To which Kim responds: “When you were chair, I wasn’t fucking phoning it in.” • Dobson comments to his department chair, Kim: “I like when you act like you’re my boss.” • While disagreeing on how McKay’s tenure file should be treated, Kim tells Rentz that she does not want to “pull rank” as department chair. Rentz is aghast and wryly comments, “you sure settled into that role.”
Ethic of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When her daughter Ju Ju is found after running away, Kim feels an urgent need to return to the faculty social because as she says, “I have to put in my time.” • While she is under pressure from university administration to force some of the senior faculty members in her department to retire, she assumes personal responsibility for the situation and seeks to identify creative solutions so as to avoid any terminations. • When Rentz’s course attracts few students, thus placing him in the crosshairs of the university administration, it is Kim who comes up with the idea for Rentz to “piggyback” on the popularity of McKay’s course by merging the two courses and having it delivered on a cotaught basis.

it far easier when it comes to exerting power that extends from their competence and authority than do women (Carli, 1999). In contrast, women derive their ability to exercise power and to influence others through the operation of referent power (Carli, 1999)—that is, by a woman becoming accepted by, and acclimated with, the members of the group whom she seeks to influence (French & Raven, 1959). In the case of the model minority leader, they must not only comport themselves to the various social identities they embody but also remain consistent with the specific expectations that the model minority stereotype entails. This point is consistent with Sy and colleagues’ (2010) finding that Asian Americans are perceived more unfavorably when they occupy leadership positions in those industries that are not associated with technical competence. Given the tenuous conditions placed on the model minority leader as it relates to power, they are often left to make recourse to *soft power*. They try to influence people indirectly; that is, without ostensibly exercising the formal powers endowed to their office.

The Chair offers glimpses into how the model minority is encouraged or coerced to exercise soft power rather than formal or legitimate power. Formal and legitimate power is mainly reserved for White men in leadership positions. Indeed, Dean Larson does not have any reservations in utilizing the powers enshrined into his office to accomplish what he wants. In contrast, the viewer observes how the protagonist is pushed toward using soft power. During the first week of her appointment as department chair, Kim has a meeting with Dean Larson. At the meeting, when Larson instructs Kim to reduce her department’s faculty count by forcing some of the senior members to retire, she originally protests by claiming that all faculty members are indispensable. However, the dean persists in his demand. Given that all of the faculty members on “the list” that the dean provides as potential targets for redundancy hold tenured positions, Larson instructs Kim to invoke her “persuasive powers” to convince the unwanted members to retire. Similarly, during the multiple interactions Kim has with Rentz about

preparing a supportive file for McKay's applications for tenure, she seeks to influence Rentz with kindness and ingratiation; that is, according to her own words, without having to "pull rank."²

Ethic of care. Since the publication of Carol Gilligan's (1982) watershed text, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, some four decades ago, there has been much scholarly interest in unraveling the nexus between gender and moral development. As Gilligan illustrated in her empirical study on the topic, moral development is distinctly gendered, with girls far more inclined to demonstrate an ethic of care versus boys who are more inclined toward an ethic of justice. Expanding the debate on the gendered predisposition to moral development, Noddings (2013: 8) insightfully observed: "Women, in particular, seem to approach moral problems by placing themselves as nearly as possible in concrete situations and assuming personal responsibility for the choices to be made." When it comes to the model minority woman of color, there is an overarching belief, undergirded in entrenched cultural stereotypes, that this subject has an almost natural predilection toward caring for, and attending to, the needs of those around her (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995; Dodson & Zincavage, 2007). The inculcation of these cultural stereotypes into organizations prove to be prescriptive; consequently, when an Asian American leader is perceived to violate them, they are met with consequences ranging from harassment to career stagnation (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Tinkler, Zhao, Li, & Ridgeway, 2019).

In the series, the viewer witnesses Kim engage in all forms of gendered care at work—whether it be caring for her undergraduate and graduate students or for her faculty colleagues. When it comes to her

colleagues, while she is under enormous pressure from the university administration to force some of the senior faculty members in the English department to retire, she assumes personal responsibility for the situation and seeks to identify creative solutions so as to avoid any terminations. For instance, when Rentz's course attracts few students, thus placing him in the crosshairs of the university administration, it is Kim who comes up with the innovative idea for Rentz to "piggyback" on the popularity of McKay's course by merging the two courses and having it delivered on a cotaught basis. Kim hopes that, through this course of action, she can offer the university administration the necessary evidence to show Rentz's significant contribution to the functioning of the department; and thereby, avoid terminating his employment. Of course, the irony is that it is the very act of caring for her colleagues that results in Kim alienating the same colleagues. This alienation ultimately leads to a successful coup that ousts Kim from the role of department chair and sees the appointment of Joan Hambling, an older White woman holding the rank of associate professor. Interestingly, this outcome is consistent with extant research that has shown how the very label of the model minority impedes the professional mobility of those Asian Americans who have been (unwittingly) stereotyped as such (Wong & Halgin, 2011).

DISAVOWING THE MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPE AND ADVANCING DEBATES ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ORGANIZATIONS

The Chair provides a rich fictional canvas to revisit the idea of the model minority in academic settings. Indeed, it proffers a reflexive space from which to conceptualize the current state of academic life for certain faculty members of color who must routinely negotiate the implications that come with having the model minority stereotype unwittingly cast upon them. Given its lucid portrayal of academic life for the faculty member of color who is rendered the model minority, it is perhaps unsurprising that the series has quickly garnered wide acclaim and has been the subject of much engagement on social media.

Ultimately, *The Chair* prompts us to consider how things must change to make universities places that are more substantively inclusive—that is, more inclusive as a matter of day-to-day practice rather than only in rhetoric. In the remainder of this article, while taking inspiration from the themes invoked in the

² To be fair, extending from the fact that the role of department chair necessarily involves the management of relatively autonomous workers (i.e., tenure-track and tenured faculty members), the use of soft power may be seen as somewhat intrinsic to the position. In other words, soft power may be an important resource for the department chair role, regardless of the racial or gender identity of the individual who holds the position. Notwithstanding this point, *The Chair* reveals how for the model minority (in contrast to a White male), the department chair role requires the wielding of soft power insofar as the invocation of formal power would render their behavior incongruent with the meanings affixed to their social identity. Again, this point suggests that the scope of actions available to the model minority is far more limited than others who occupy more agentic social identities.

series, which are discussed above, I engage with germane discourses on diversity issues in organizations to identify three concrete acts that may be pursued going forward in order to advance the project for meaningful inclusion of the model minority in universities—although some of the insights offered may be equally pertinent, or otherwise portable, to other organizations and industries. The acts include: (a) reframing diversity and inclusion on their own terms, (b) asserting their value through institutionalized metrics, and (c) establishing allyship between themselves and other racialized minorities. Although these acts may be read as disruptive to the status quo of today's universities, the consequences of inaction would be detrimental to the model minority as well as the academic community more broadly. At the very minimum, without engaged intervention, the profession risks losing talented academic faculty members of color to disillusionment, disengagement, or attrition—and this potential loss would have significant and enduring effects on both pedagogy and knowledge production going forward.

Before turning to discuss the acts themselves, it is worth acknowledging that the agentic value of the acts will be contingent upon the demographical disposition of the discipline in which they are being operationalized. When comparing business schools with the liberal arts, salient demographical differences will impact the effectiveness of the acts. Student enrollment in the liberal arts is decelerating, while many business schools are seeing steady or growing student demand. These trends explain, at least in part, the demographical makeup of academic faculty members in the two fields. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 76% of all full-time academic faculty members are White (Davis & Fry, 2019); in contrast, in business schools, only 57% of all full-time academic faculty members are White (AACSB International, 2021). In having a larger percentage of its academic faculty who are non-White, it may make some of the acts (e.g., establishing allyships) more tenable in business schools than in other disciplines.

Reframing Diversity and Inclusion on Their Own Terms

Members of the model minority, regardless of their formal citizenship, often find themselves in what some scholars have labeled a state of *perpetual foreignness* in their “host” country (Mahadevan & Kilian-Yasin, 2017). Because the model minority is perceived to be a guest of the host country, they are

considered to never fully belong and therefore do not have access to the same social rights as those individuals from the dominant class who possess substantive citizenship. To flesh out this idea, in her 2010 presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2011: 3) offered the following distinction between formal citizenship and substantive citizenship: “Citizenship is not just a matter of formal legal status; it is a matter of *belonging*, which requires *recognition* by other members of the community” (emphasis in original). As she further explicated: “Community members participate in drawing the boundaries of citizenship and defining who is entitled to civil, political, and social rights” (Glenn, 2011: 3). Denied substantive citizenship, the model minority ultimately encounters a set of contradictory discourses related to their presence in the host country wherein they are simultaneously welcomed (read: granted legal citizenship) and excluded (read: denied social rights possessed by those who have substantive citizenship). These contradictory discourses fundamentally inform the experiences of Asian Americans as they are routinely positioned in circumstances that deem them to be foreign in their own land (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007).

Owing to the racial markers that the model minority embodies, they cannot simply undo their perpetual foreignness with either the years—or even the generations—of productive value they contribute to the host country or their willingness to assimilate into the culture of whiteness (see Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011; Ng & Lam, 2020; Prasad & Qureshi, 2017). Herein the perversity embedded in the construction of the model minority stereotype is laid bare: even while the model minority may be willing to unreservedly relinquish their own sense of self in efforts to assimilate into the dominant culture of the host country, their racial signifiers will continue to deny them from attaining full and meaningful inclusion.

On this matter, it would be conceptually useful to interpret the foreign–host dynamic through the writings of social philosopher Jacques Derrida (2000). In his work on hospitality, Derrida metaphorically explained:

He who receives, who is master in his house, in his household, in his state, in his nation, in his city, in his town, who remains master in his house—who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be no conditional welcome, no unconditional passage through the door. (Derrida, 2000: 4)

As such, the model minority is expected to yield to the tacit and explicit conditions of hospitality defined

by their host; above all, this means not disrupting the prevailing status quo of the host country in which they now reside—not even when that status quo pivots on their own exclusion.

Juxtaposed against the conditions of hospitality, when initiatives for diversity and inclusion are presented by the dominant class, it is anticipated that the model minority will accept them graciously. Indeed, they are to express appreciation for the initiatives promoted by the dominant class, regardless of whether they actually believe that such initiatives will engender meaningful or sustainable institutional change. This is consistent with extant research from critical diversity scholars who have found that the rhetoric of diversity, as propagated by the dominant class, does not substantively attend to remedying the social inequalities that structure organizations (e.g., Adamson, Kelan, Lewis, Sliwa, & Rumens, 2021; Ahonen, Tienari, Merilainen, & Pullen, 2014; Ferdman, 2018; Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010); on the contrary, as Zanoni and Janssens (2004: 71) observed, “diversity discourses are . . . actively deployed to reaffirm [existing] class relations.”

Initiatives for diversity and inclusion provided to the model minority—as well as to other minority groups—only go so far because often the forms of accommodations made are limited to those that the dominant class feels comfortable offering. This allows for members of the dominant class to feel benevolent, progressive, and culturally “woke,” yet without destabilizing the underlying social systems that maintain their privileged status to the relational detriment of relegated others. The maintenance of these social systems only serves to reify the boundaries of exclusion in organizations (Zulfiqar & Prasad, 2021). Even a cursory analysis of Ji-Yoon Kim’s treatment by her predominantly White colleagues reveals this phenomenon unfolding in *The Chair*. Kim is elected as department chair by her colleagues (signaling greater inclusion). However, it is apparent that she is expected to maintain the department’s status quo (signaling that inclusion is contingent upon her remaining within the terms and the conditions that have been defined by the dominant class). The moment her colleagues feel that Kim is transgressing from this directive, they launch a successful coup to remove her from her elected position.

It is no longer sufficient to have the question of what it means to be inclusive answered by the dominant class, and it is even less acceptable to yield to the terms and the conditions of inclusion that the dominant class mandates. Initiatives for greater inclusivity are intended for members of those groups

who have been historically excluded from full participation in organizational and civic life. It is only reasonable, then, that members of those same groups be actively involved in any discourse related to the advancement of organizational inclusion. This is consistent with Ferdman’s (2018: 98) contention that “inclusion is an active process in which individuals, organizations, and societies—rather than seeking to foster homogeneity—view and approach diversity as a valued resource.” The model minority has an especially important role to play in the “active process” of bringing inclusion to fruition. Because the model minority is socially constructed as being less threatening to the dominant class than individuals from other more denigrated racialized minority groups, they can exercise their relatively higher degree of agency to intervene in organizational debates on diversity and inclusion. At the very least, this intervention can amplify “the contemporary complexity, paradoxes and issues that still remain with the process of inclusion in organizations” (Adamson et al., 2021: 213).

(Re-)Asserting Their Value Through Institutionalized Metrics

Given that the model minority has been “welcomed” into the host country, they are expected to exhibit humility (Ng et al., 2007). This expectation is only further reified by the Orientalist discourse circulating in the host country that renders the model minority as someone who comes from a culture that is ontologically more collectivist than individualistic (Pon, 2000; also see Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005). Part and parcel with the stereotype that associates them with humility and collectivism is the expectation that the model minority will express various acts of self-deprecation, including minimizing their individual professional accomplishments. So, while it may be known generally that the model minority is performing well, it remains expected that they themselves do not focus too greatly on their own individual outcomes and certainly do not give colleagues the impression that they are making their own individual outcomes the focus of distinction or entitlement. In sum, it is demanded of them to comport themselves in ways that ultimately lead to their professional achievements being negated or otherwise not fully recognized or rewarded within their organization.

In the context of the university, it is crucial for the academic faculty member of color who is labeled the model minority to avail themselves of any compelling evidence to assert their value to their organization.

This may be done in several ways. In business schools, there exist certain institutionalized metrics to assess, for instance, the quality of a faculty member's research output (see Agarwal, Khanna, & Singhal, 2020). To this point, there are a number of journal quality lists that, for better or for worse, perform as a shorthand reference guide to substantiate the value of an academic's research output (e.g., the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List, the Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide, the *Financial Times* 50 list, and the University of Texas-Dallas 24 list). The model minority can invoke such lists to benchmark themselves against others—whether it be within their institution or within the field more generally. This benchmarking exercise would be undertaken in order to, among other things, validate the number of articles they have published, the quality of the journals in which those articles have appeared, and the accrued citation counts of those articles.

Some may contend that for the model minority to rely on institutionalized metrics to assert their value to the university would, in and of itself, be a problematic endeavor (e.g., Ratle, Robinson, Bristow, & Kerr, 2020). Specifically, institutionalized metrics in the form of journal quality lists have been criticized by management scholars for being overly narrow in focus (Adler & Harzing, 2009; Butler & Spoelstra, 2014; Prasad, 2013). Consequently, journals that often hold top-tier status on such lists are accused of failing to ask and answer socially relevant questions (Willmott, 2011), generating little value to practice (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) or to society (Tourish, 2020), relying on West-centric thinking that promotes the existing racial order (Liu, 2022), excluding certain types of research on paradigmatic grounds (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012), and catering to the interests, modes of theorizing, and language of the Global North (Barros & Alcadipani, 2022; Prasad, Segarra, & Villanueva, 2019; Segarra, Villanueva, & Martinez, 2022). Taking these critiques together, I fully concede that institutionalized metrics are neither perfect nor holistic in evaluating an academic faculty member's substantive contribution to knowledge production in their discipline, and they are perhaps even less accurate in accounting for how a faculty member's scholarship contributes to the broader communities in which they are located. Perhaps even more critically, the utilization of institutionalized metrics does not address the root causes of institutional racism in the university (Dar, Liu, Dy, & Brewis, 2021; Liu, 2022) that may have played a role in preventing some racial minority faculty members from generating publications in top-tier journals in the first place.

Without wholly repudiating the merits of these lines of criticism—as indeed, much of it remains valid—the model minority, when it is appropriate to do so, should leverage institutionalized metrics as one mechanism by which to defend themselves against discriminatory organizational practices. Such an act may be proverbially read as a form of, to turn Audre Lorde's (1984) famous quote on its head, *using the master's tool to dismantle the master's house*. The circumstances under which the deployment of institutionalized metrics is appropriate would obviously depend on how well the model minority performs along those metrics. Returning to *The Chair*, the utility of institutionalized metrics is evident when juxtaposing the ways in which Yazmin “Yaz” McKay's—a Black woman professor—teaching versus research contributions are judged by Elliott Rentz, a White male professor who is chairing McKay's tenure application panel.³ All evidence provided in the series suggests that McKay is an outstanding teacher whose classes—unlike those of others in the department, including Rentz—yield high student interest and enrollment, even oversubscription. However, rather than recognize McKay's teaching contributions to the university, Rentz interprets her pedagogical approach critically. As he laments to his wife, McKay “doesn't wanna teach [students]. She wants to hang out with them.” Interestingly, the only area of McKay's tenure file that Rentz appears to offer any sort of “positive assessment” is her research. As the viewer learns during the same private conversation that Rentz shares with his wife, McKay is “publishing in the highest venues.” As there are discipline-based institutionalized metrics in academia (e.g., journal quality lists) which attribute “objective” value to scholarly

³ As suggested in the earlier discussion on who qualifies as the “model minority,” those who fit the category hold high levels of ethnic capital as compared to members of other racially disenfranchised groups. While this discussion points to the fact that the model minority and other racially disenfranchised groups encounter different forms of organizational discrimination (see Rosette et al., 2016), it is equally worth underscoring that the two groups also possess certain overlapping experiences with discrimination as an outcome of their loosely shared condition of occupying spaces that privilege whiteness. As such, some of the tools available to the model minority and other racially disenfranchised groups by which to counteract workplace discrimination that they encounter will be similar. While the use of institutionalized metrics is most closely associated with examples found in a Black faculty member's storyline in *The Chair* (i.e., McKay), its potential utility remains promising for the model minority.

output—and thus determine what constitutes the field’s “highest venues”—it is far more difficult for Rentz to deny McKay’s contributions to research than it is to undermine her based on other areas of her tenure file, particularly areas where such metrics may be absent. While as a Black person McKay would not be categorized as a model minority, the insights from this scene may be extrapolated to conceptualize how institutionalized metrics can be an asset—a source of leverage—for the model minority to effectively assert their own value to the university.

Rentz’s reading of McKay’s research output demonstrates how the “penalties” usually incurred by certain minority women can be counteracted through institutionalized metrics (Berdahl & Min, 2012; Berdahl & Moore, 2007). Namely, institutionalized metrics can be fruitfully leveraged by the model minority to reassert their value to the organization even when there exist undercurrents of institutional racism. This is consistent with the observation that my colleague and I made in a recent editorial, which found that there is “agentic value of journal ranking [as it] offers a path by which we can attend to the needs of some of the most socially disenfranchised members of the academy” (Prasad & Sliwa, 2022: 140).

In sum, minorities are especially vulnerable to institutional racism in organizations in the absence of clear performance benchmarks. Performance benchmarks that possess at least the veneer of “objectivity” allow them to validate their contributions and professional worth. The dearth of such benchmarks permits the scope of individual discretion—from managers, human resource officers, promotion committees, etc.—to be expanded in organizational decision-making processes, which in turn increases the likelihood and the magnitude of bias that the model minority encounters in their professional careers (Auster & Prasad, 2016). As extant research has demonstrated, the exercise of increased individual discretion disproportionately harms workers from socially disenfranchised communities (Roscigno, Garcia, & Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). Accordingly, when the model minority performs well based on established benchmarks against others in their organization or industry, institutionalized metrics can serve as a powerful tool in reclaiming their value and asserting their rightful place within their organization.

Establishing Allyship with Other Racialized Minorities

Management scholars studying gender and diversity issues in organizations have underscored the

importance of allyship among different relegated groups to subvert various social inequalities. For instance, Rumens (2012) has identified how workplace relationships between straight women and gay men present an avenue by which to combat heterosexism in organizations. Prasad and colleagues (2021) have demonstrated how men aligning with the feminist project for gender egalitarianism offers one trajectory through which to repudiate patriarchy as it materializes both at work and at home. More recently, Fletcher and Marvell (2022) have shown how nontrans workers’ allyship with the trans community increases the latter’s well-being in work contexts. Such lines of scholarly inquiry point to the important role that strategic allyship plays in realizing more inclusive workplaces.

Unfortunately, the definition of the model minority itself alludes to the challenges of establishing necessary allyships. Indeed, the term’s very meaning distinguishes the individual who is classified as the model minority from those who occupy other racialized minority statuses. After all, the model minority is considered to be “‘too successful’ to be considered a disadvantaged minority group” (Cheng, 1997: 278). As further observed by one researcher, to be a model minority in the context of the United States is to be a person of color who is “definitely not black” (Wu, 2014: 2). This cultural demarcation between the model minority and other racialized minorities functions to sow discord between communities who otherwise share common ground based on their mutual—though asymmetrical—experiences with institutional racism and historical marginalization. It preemptively destroys the formation of strategic allyships that would be otherwise productive in unraveling the many insidious forms of racialized organizational practices that configure much of contemporary social relations.

It should be acknowledged that when the model minority establishes allyships with other racialized minorities, the former would likely incur some costs. Indeed, because the model minority, relative to members of other racialized minority groups (Cheng, 1997), has been the beneficiary of certain unearned privileges associated with entrenched racial hierarchies, in the process of creating allyship with those racialized minorities who are more culturally denigrated, these unearned privileges may need to be forsaken.⁴ However, if the ultimate objective is to

⁴ Interestingly, in having Kim (who is Asian) as the senior professor and McKay (who is Black) as a junior professor in *The Chair*, it tacitly reified the existing racial

transform the structures and the institutions that foster racism in society with the intent to eliminate racism, then strategic allyships are necessary regardless of the collateral costs that may be incurred to the model minority who occupies a more privileged position than members of other racially disenfranchised groups.

How such allyships may materialize within the workplace will be somewhat context dependent. Namely, the specific racialized minority groups that experience some of the greatest marginalization will differ depending on geographical location. Black Americans in the United States and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, for example, have been subjected to some of the most reprehensible forms of racism in their respective countries and therefore could be expected to be among the groups most likely to benefit from strategic allyships with the model minority. *The Chair* presents an example of this allyship in action when Kim actively petitions for Yaz McKay's—the department's only Black academic faculty member—bid for tenure and her appointment to a distinguished lectureship. Although Kim's attempts are not successful, and McKay ultimately elects to resign from Pembroke given the hostility she encounters from various White colleagues, it appears as though McKay appreciates Kim's expressions of allyship as demonstrated by the candid conversations shared between them throughout the series. For instance, the following dialogue between the two women suggests that McKay recognizes the loosely shared condition of exploitation between Blacks and Asians in America:

Yaz McKay: "You act like you owe them something. Like you're here because they let you be here, not because you deserve it. I mean, what are they without us at this point? A name and a pile of bricks."

Ji-Yoon Kim: "A shit ton of money."

Yaz McKay: "Seeded by benefactors who got rich off of sugar and cotton and railroads off the backs of Black people and yellow people . . . You should be running this place. Instead, you're running around playing nice."

Indeed, McKay attributes the power and the privilege discursively embedded in White culture at Pembroke University to those who tacitly benefit from

the unrecognized—and often unremunerated—labor of "Black people and yellow people."

The Chair also alludes to the fact that allyship between the model minority and other racialized minority groups may be fraught with tension. It is Kim who implores McKay to coteach with Rentz. Kim's dual intentions for this coteaching arrangement are clear: (a) she wants to show the university administration that all faculty members within the English department are essential and, accordingly, that no one should be made redundant or removed from their position; and (b) she wants Rentz to see just how "awesome" McKay is and thus write a favorable assessment for McKay's tenure file. In creating this coteaching arrangement, Kim is seeking to please everyone. This is again consistent with the (woman) model minority's predilection to demonstrate care for and attend to the needs of those around them. Although Kim's intentions are benevolent, her actions ultimately end up harming McKay as the coteaching experiment proves only to further alienate Rentz from McKay. And, in the end, McKay makes the decision to leave Pembroke altogether. This anecdote goes to demonstrate that expressions of allyship between the model minority and other racialized minority groups are neither easy nor always successful. While understanding that they are not a guaranteed or absolute solution, expressions of allyship can perform as a powerful mechanism to combat institutional racism in the workplace.

In short, the model minority ought to utilize the agency to which they have access. In the academic setting, it may include offering opportunities to collaborate or using their capacity as a member of senior administration, the university's tenure and promotions committee, or journal editorial teams. Such efforts would be pursued to advance the careers of members of other socially disenfranchised minority groups. Even in the business school setting—an academic space widely known for its competitiveness and hypermasculinity (Simpson, 2006)—there are signs of this type of allyship materializing. Take, for example, the recently initiated Action to Improve Representation (AIR) Collective. AIR Collective's (2021) mandate "aims to improve representation in management scholarship through a program targeted at early career business and management academics from underrepresented groups in India." AIR offers management researchers from underrepresented groups in India (e.g., members of lower castes) the opportunity to work under the mentorship of an established scholar (most of whom are women or racial minorities) in the field over the course of one

hierarchy in which Asian Americans, as a model minority, hold a higher social status than Black Americans—although both groups remain subordinate to Whites.

year so as to promote professional development and to generate research output for the former. Such efforts not only help contribute to fostering better representation of the professoriate by creating space for academics coming from underrepresented groups, but they increase the likelihood of establishing a critical mass of racialized minority academics—though with different levels of social power—who may eventually serve as allies for one another. And, as more racialized minorities come to occupy positions of authority within universities, the operation of institutional racism, both against the model minority and those racialized others not designated as such, would become increasingly less tenable.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Due to its inherent complexities, diversity continues to be a challenge for organizations to meaningfully accommodate. The nuances found in the social identities of racialized minorities, for example, capture the rich but deeply varied experiences that such individuals possess. These varied experiences inform their life at work in salient and idiosyncratic ways, including the scope and the nature of their encounters with discrimination.

The Chair provides a thought-provoking, popular culture resource through which to make sense of the workplace experiences of the model minority. While the series presents a fictitious account and is thus not a representation of “real-life” events, it does portray the challenging experiences that structure the professional lives of those who have been labeled the model minority. Through critical analysis of the series, this article elucidates how the model minority encounters institutional racism that is targeted specifically at them. Although *The Chair* posits the model minority experience in a university setting, much of the analysis found in this article can be logically extended to other professions and industries. Indeed, institutional racism is a ubiquitous phenomenon encountered by the model minority, regardless of the profession or the industry in which they may be located. If substantive workplace inclusion is the overarching goal for those scholars and practitioners invested in the advancement of diversity, it will be integral to first understand the specific antecedents of exclusion as experienced by understudied minority populations. This article has sought to offer a modest contribution toward this effort with its focus on making sense of the organizational realities of one such minority population.

The costs to organizations for not establishing spaces of inclusion are substantial. As Fitzsimmons

(2013) conceptualized in her study of multicultural employees, individuals whose self is informed by multiple salient cultural identities—which is, owing to their ethnic background and migration, always the case for the model minority—add significant value to their organizations. Among other things, when one’s multiple cultural identities are accommodated—and, therefore, substantive organizational inclusion is achieved—it enhances their action and analytical skills as well as their well-being and performance (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Ramarajan, 2014). Those labeled the model minority are critically positioned to bridge multiple cultural identities and yield constructive benefits to their organizations; yet, as this article has illuminated, the entrenchment of the model minority stereotype sets restrictive parameters on how they are expected to behave, which in effect obfuscates the realization of their full potential to the organization.

Finally, I conclude by again acknowledging the fact that relinquishing the model minority stereotype will not be a seamless endeavor. The model minority stereotype is entrenched with social meanings that bestow certain unearned privileges onto those who assume it. Unfortunately, these same social meanings also perform to establish their complicity in maintaining the existing racial hierarchies, which in turn functions to disenfranchise them by culturally normalizing whiteness (Ng & Lam, 2020). As such, it is important to do away with the model minority stereotype as it harms even those individuals within the population who are its ostensible beneficiaries.

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