

Intersectionality and Crisis Management

A Path to Social Equity

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Introduction

We can't escape the media. In our wired society we are no longer relegated to catching the news on our televisions or radios at set times during the day or evening. We carry it with us everywhere, from computers to mobile phones to watches. We believe society's pervasive exposure to media in real time, from around the world, gives us an unprecedented view into (in)equitable distribution of crisis management practices on a global scale. This view provides a unique opportunity for change.

By writing *Intersectionality and Crisis Management: A Path to Social Equity* we intentionally set about embedding the equity discourse into how we conceptualize crisis. For the first time, we're demonstrating that using an intersectional framework could advance the ideals and principles of equity and transform how we serve people before, during, and after crisis. This drives our premise that practitioners and scholars need new strategies to manage (and study) organizational processes, employees, and services. Our assertion is that by joining intersectionality and crisis management, we have created a platform from which to develop these new strategies. We propose the Integrative Crisis Management Model as an alternative to traditional models. Along the way, we have provided clarity among definitions of intersectionality and crisis management, considered human resource management implications, and provided examples of applications of these concepts in practice.

In this concluding chapter, we introduce our new integrative model and its relevance for the practitioner. Ultimately, we hope that we stimulate conversations and opportunities that bridge the gap between practice and theory for more informed crisis management.

Transformation: Introducing the Integrative Crisis Management Model

Crisis management models generally contain some iteration of these key strategic planning elements – signaling or detection, risk identification and prevention, containment, return to normal, assessment, and redesign (Fink, 1986; Mitroff, Shrivastava, & Udvardia, 1987). Burnett (1998) offers a further breakdown of what is necessary to accurately assess crisis decisions: threat level, time constraints, key decision makers, available information, and implications for actions taken. Yet, missing from each of these models is the intersectional context for analysis. Therefore, all crisis management is limited – unable to fully account for the disparate impact crisis has on people and communities as a result of their intersectional attributes. We assert a redesign of the traditional crisis management model is long overdue.

Mitroff et al. (1987) are credited with early development of crisis management models, as shown in Figure 6.1, which is adapted from their work. This is the traditional model for crisis management. Understanding how to read the five elements in Figure 6.1 is as follows: *Signal Detection* identifies potential areas of concern and risk; *Probing & Prevention* attempts to investigate and promote risk mitigation and informs preparation; *Damage Containment* works to lessen the impact of the crisis as it is happening; *Recovery* lays out steps for rebuilding, and *Assessment and Learning* analyzes effectiveness by identifying what worked and what can be done better. As you can see from the arrows in Figure 6.1, there is opportunity for feedback across these five elements of the model. We have chosen to build upon this traditional model and its continuous feedback loop because of its clarity and universality in understanding how to effectively manage crisis.

Our proposed Integrative Crisis Management Model (ICCM), depicted in Figure 6.2, offers a transformative adaptation that we believe will lead to more equitable practices. By pausing to engage in more intentional intersectional analysis, we believe planners will be able to more holistically serve their communities. The adaptation presented in Figure 6.2 activates a new framework of four constructs that can be used for improving intersectional context. This framework can lead to more integrative and comprehensive analysis, planning, and practice at key stages of crisis management.

Using Mitroff's five foundational stages of crisis management (presented in gray in Figure 6.1) – Signal Detection, Probing and Prevention, Damage Containment, Recovery, and Assessment and Learning, we overlay our intersectional framework (presented in black in Figure 6.2) to identify key stages at which we can integrate myriad community attributes and identities to guide deeper understanding of people and their communities. In turn, this could strengthen resiliency behaviors and activities. Our four essential elements of integrative activation that comprise the intersectional framework



Figure 6.1 Crisis Management Model

Source: Adapted Mitroff et al. (1987)

are: *Understanding Intersectional Constructs, Identifying Intersectional Practices, Implementing Intersectional Practices, and Reviewing Intersectional Outcomes.*

The power of this Integrative Crisis Management Model lies in its opportunity for more transparent and open discourse and acknowledgement of planning and implementation decisions and actions that fully serve, or not, the needs of communities. Through this new discourse, we can attempt to redress disparities in public service provisions. We use examples from the COVID-19 global pandemic to guide understanding of how the four intersectional elements of the integrative model provide deeper consideration for practice. Conceptually, we have engaged the five stages of crisis management where it is most crucial to step back and analyze each stage

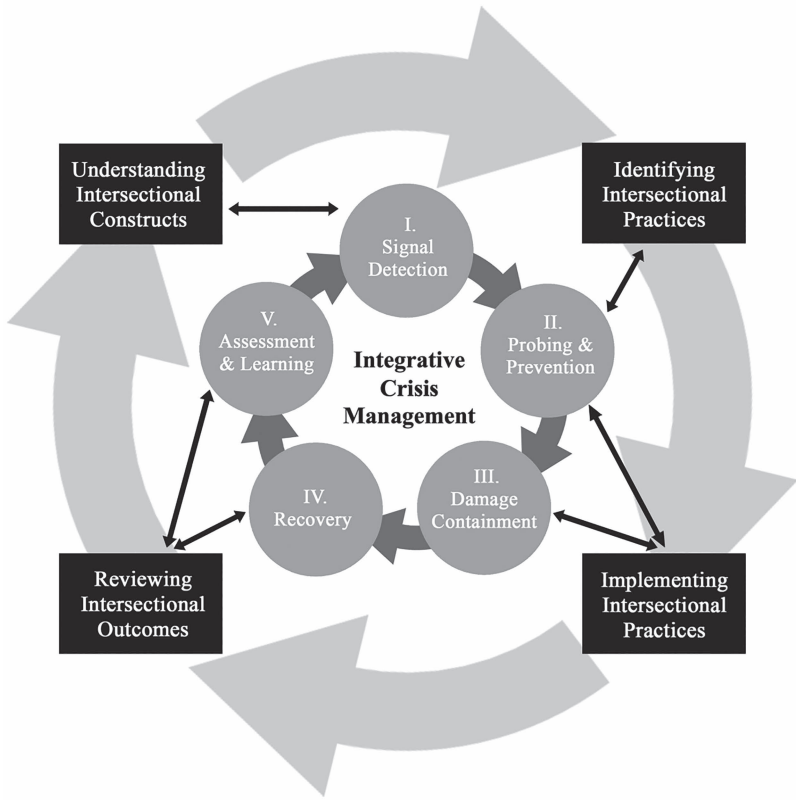


Figure 6.2 The Integrative Crisis Management Model

within the context of intersectionality. To provide further clarification, each stage is accompanied by an example to illustrate the application of the intersectional frame. It is our hope that our new integrative model, combined with the examples, will spur reflective thinking and result in more equitable practices.

Understanding Intersectional Constructs can be used at the first stage, Signal Detection, to build a more complete and equitable understanding of potential problems and risk. This is accomplished by identifying intersectional constructs that lead to problem differentiation. For example, in considering the potential challenges of a global pandemic, it was important to consider that low-income minority women work disproportionately in service jobs, placing them in riskier settings, and in turn that they would

have less access to adequate personal protective equipment. *Identifying Intersectional Practices* can be applied in the second stage, Probing and Prevention. At this stage, more equitable risk mitigation and preparation practices could be identified. Examples of this could include preparing for ways to overcome a historic cultural lack of trust in healthcare providers or religious concerns with vaccination, both of which put separate communities at heightened risk. After that, *Implementing Intersectional Practices* informs Damage Containment (and provides additional feedback for Probing and Prevention). Examples here for risk mitigation include building trust between healthcare providers and individuals within targeted communities or boosting internet capacity, because education for low-income students of color was disproportionately affected during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hough, 2021). Last, Reviewing Intersectional Outcomes informs Assessment and Learning, which feeds back into improvements in managing Recovery efforts. In other words, who was most and least affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? What could have been done differently to protect neighborhoods more equitably? Did working mothers fare better in some neighborhoods and not others? Why? Assessment here can be quantitative and qualitative to dig deep into the intersectional drivers that most affected recovery efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic is a useful example of crisis to illustrate how our Integrative Crisis Management Model could yield better outcomes. This model is easily applied to other crises, such as climate change and economic recessions, and offers a disruptive perspective in crisis management. Climate change and economic recession are complex problems, and each has a long history of inequity – particularly with low income communities being less protected and at greater risk of increased adversity as a result. However, it is important to note that intersectional considerations are not limited to equity across socioeconomic differences, and in fact, the roster of intersectional attributes is dynamic. For example, the global pandemic revealed continuing inequities in other areas, including working mothers across various income levels in terms of workload, productivity, caregiving, and stress.

To illustrate the Integrative Crisis Management Model in action, we use the example of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic violence is a prime example of how the intersectional categories of difference build upon each other to compound obstacles, burdens, and outcomes. Domestic violence is generally framed as partner-on-partner violence with a gendered power dynamic with women as the victim – although this framing has evolved over time to recognize domestic violence within same-sex relationships, with male-identifying victims, and child on parent violence. The dynamics of domestic violence are strongly

influenced by intersectional attributes (Understanding Intersectional Constructs), such as race, ethnicity, parental status, socioeconomic status, health/(dis)ability, among a host of others. Pandemic policies, such as stay-at-home orders, highlighted how social isolation, transportation, employment status (i.e. essential worker), whether someone had school-aged children, whether there were mental health issues, or alcoholism, or even pet ownership, were often linked to increases in domestic violence. The COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in domestic violence statistics throughout the world (Usher, Bhullar, Durkin, Gyamfi, & Jackson, 2020), particularly in countries with strong patriarchal cultural values (Maji, Bansod, & Singh, 2022). Domestic violence is strongly linked to economic instability, child care issues, or even household chore distribution (George & Wesley, 2021). As Chapter 4 discussed, women and women of color are disproportionately represented in lower paying jobs, in limited childcare situations, and impacted by pandemic-related unemployment – with the implications of these making it more challenging to leave a domestic home situation.

Policy development and implementation (Identifying and Implementing Intersectional Practices) efforts would need to incorporate concern for issues such as overcoming vaccine hesitancy based on historical trust issues in the Black and LGBTQ+ communities, while at the same time battling long-held fears by domestic violence in attempting to reach out for help, or perhaps battling stigmas related to mental health or substance abuse issues. It is possible that men, both homosexual and heterosexual, may have worried about stigmas related to masculinity social norms, thereby reducing their willingness to seek help. Recent years have also seen calls for a shift in policies related to domestic violence shelters allowing pets, or having partnerships with animal shelters, following recognition that abusers often use violence or threats of violence against pets as control mechanisms (Newberry, 2017). George and Wesley (2021) argue for the importance of accounting for intersectional attributes, including gender, financials, health/(dis)ability, emotional/physical wellbeing, as well as cultural factors, in future domestic violence policy development. The last stage, that of Reviewing Intersectional Outcomes, would need to evaluate the role that intersectional attributes played in COVID-19 pandemic policies, such as evaluating how decisions whether to shift to remote learning, work-from-home, and social isolation in general might be linked to increases in domestic violence, especially for vulnerable populations.

We argue our innovative Integrative Crisis Management Model delivers an intersectional approach to crisis management that is essential to improve management operations and practices, especially in the era of the “*new normal*.” For example, we now see a new dependence upon remote work for

some and increased worksite risk for others. We see the disparate impact of educational losses in children. And unlike generations past, we have a ubiquitous 24/7 news cycle to constantly amplify inequity amid crisis from around the globe. This affords a motivation unseen in our history as we are constantly faced with privilege and oppression and the regressive nature of disadvantage.

This new integrative management model hopes to raise awareness about these issues and provide a platform from which managers and leaders can confront these inequities. This new model combines identification and analysis of vulnerabilities and oversights, recognition of the need to analyze disparate impacts based on intersectional identities, assessments, and consideration of new approaches in policy and implementation methods moving forward, and the fortitude to move away from status quo power dynamics. For instance, post-evaluation of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters found many areas where the lack of intersectional consideration led to significant, and often deadly, impacts on physical and emotional well-being. Intersectional lessons learned included how availability of pet-friendly shelters might impact decisions to evacuate (Hunt, Bogue, & Rohrbach, 2012). At the same time, definitions of “family” as two parents of different genders led to same-sex families being separated during evacuations or denied housing assistance post-disaster, which were often further compounded for those dealing with HIV/AIDS, or through exclusion from faith-based services (Monroe, 2006; Stukes, 2014; see also Whetstone & Demiroz, 2023). Without discounting the magnitude of these types of negative impacts, they also have economic and efficiency impacts, much like is seen in medicine, with preventative measures and policy modifications being infinitely more beneficial than dealing with the emotional, moral, and economic after-effects.

New approaches may entail a shift away from viewing social equity efforts as a “tradeoff” to either economy or efficiency (Lebovits & Teal, 2020), and instead more as an addition or value added. Ultimately, we propose that organizations and leaders who embrace opportunities for an intersectional approach to management, particularly in times of crisis, will reap the benefits in terms of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and most important, in terms of social equity.

The Future of Scholarship

Theoretical examination of intersectionality enhances our understanding of the world around us and facilitates our construction of knowledge (Atewologun, 2018). It is also crucial that organizations change how they conceptualize problems that affect their operations due to multiple intersecting

identities and positions and reconsider how problems are addressed and solved. The chapters in this book have built upon intersectional research to provide strategies that advance equity during times of crisis.

The future of intersectionality and crisis management is very promising. Methodological approaches are capturing intersecting and overlapping social constructs through quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Theobald (2017) used multi-level intersectional analysis to study direct care workers with and without migrant backgrounds and found that systemic disparities exist based on migrant status, skill, and sector. The findings also indicate that cultural differences, language barriers, prejudice, migration, and professional policies contribute to structural inequalities. Bauer and Scheim (2019) noticed that many quantitative studies on intersectionality concentrate on social inequalities across classifications of groups versus mediating factors that lead to disproportionate social outcomes. They argue that studying the effects of mediating variables such as discrimination can improve our comprehension of intersectional inequalities, determine the effect of causal processes at various intersections, and generate better hypotheses. Ding, Lu, & Riccucci (2021) examine the relationship between representative bureaucracy and organizational performance through a meta-analysis of quantitative studies. They assert that the interaction between representative bureaucracy and organizational performance leads to effectiveness and equity along with transparency and fairness. They also suggest that research on representative bureaucracy should concentrate on the intersection of multiple identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity.

The Academy itself is not immune to struggles with intersectionality. How inclusive can our crisis management scholarship and practices be if we're unable to create more inclusive representativeness in the Academy? One notable illustration of this is the challenge with identifying author and scholar intersectionality. Biographical data that is publicly available generally does not clearly disclose intersectional information. For example, on a website, inclusion of a photograph may serve as a proxy for the gender with which one identifies. However, this is limited to a more binary interpretation of gender and for those who present clearly in a masculine-feminine manner. Many author and scholar attributes that would be consistent with intersectionality are not available in a searchable format. How frequently do we see a scholarly article include an author biography that notes "the author identifies as a gay white man who uses a wheelchair" or "the author identifies as a neurodiverse, able-bodied Black woman" or any other number of iterations? While these examples are purely illustrative, clearly it can be difficult to know if scholars identify as LGBTQ+, or as people with disabilities or as indigenous or several other intersectional attributes that require self-disclosure. Gender, religion, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background,

etc. are among those attributes that can be challenging to identify. Disclosure has not always been the best career move. Take for example, many early women writers who published under pen names to hide their gender (The Bronte Sisters with Charlotte as Currer, Anne as Acton, and Emily as Ellis Bell; Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupi as George Sand, Mary Ann Evans as George Eliot or Louisa May Alcott as A.M. Branard). As it turns out, those early women authors' worries remain valid today – Catherine Nichols (2015) conducted an hoc experiment where she emailed a cover letter and a few pages of her completed novel to literary agents under a man's name as well as her own and discovered that manuscripts sent under a man's name were more than eight times likelier to receive a request for the full manuscript than those sent under her own name, Catherine.

In some instances, there may be exclusion and discrimination concerns when being public and open with personal information. In other cases, the vehicle for disclosing this information is often relegated to very short biographies included in scholarly articles. Some scholars may be highly visible – using social media and websites to raise awareness and to openly share varying intersectional attributes. Others may not feel safe in their ability to disclose this information. While assumptions may be made about some of these attributes and identities, without actively and openly sharing this information, accuracy remains elusive. Another consideration may be that just because someone conducts research on indigenous cultures does not mean that person is themselves indigenous. Finally, how citations are managed, both in text and in reference lists, can restrict visibility for emerging scholars, and without the use of first names, virtually no clues regarding gender identity are available. While these clues are imperfect, at least they begin to provide some enhanced visibility, particularly crucial in academic disciplines that are male dominated. The larger question remains – ensuring inclusivity across a range of intersectional attributes will better inform scholarship and practice, not only in crisis management, but in the broader academic world in general.

The Future of Practice

Managing crisis through an intersectional framework requires transformational leaders. The overlapping attributes of transformational leaders include the ability to develop a vision for the organization and to cultivate a team identity. Transformational leaders are also effective in implementing innovative initiatives, communication, delegation, and motivating employees to be agents of change (Dwiedienawati, Tjahjana, Faisal, Gandasari, & Abdinagoro, 2021). This style of leadership complements an intersectional approach to crisis management. When intersectionality is used as

an analytical tool, the transition from theory to practice can be carefully designed to address social inequalities and improve business practices.

The chapters in this book provide practical strategies for practitioners, academics, and policymakers. Whetstone and Demiroz (Chapter 2) argue that leaders in disaster management need to attend to power relations during crisis and consider contextuality when creating policies and delivering services. Employers can conduct a vulnerability analysis or assessment to better understand the intersectionality of their employees, vendors, and partnerships at the organizational level and their goods, services, and target population at the service level. A vulnerability analysis will allow employers to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiencies and risks or harms that may affect employees, services, or goods. Silverio et al. (Chapter 3) propose that organizations should reframe their existing policies and embrace inclusive perspectives. They also suggest that organizations in healthcare should invest in funded research to identify underlying causes of misdiagnosis and adverse outcomes for marginalized communities. To address organizational inequities and the delivery of healthcare services, an intersectional outcome analysis can be conducted to measure the progress of the changes at the organizational and service level. Ultimately, this may result in “radically redefining” impacts that necessitate equally significant changes in management structures, styles, and applications.

Hoang et al. (Chapter 4) address intersectional human resource management (HRM) in more depth, examining and linking the macro (societal) level, meso (organizational) level, and the individual (micro) level. The authors highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed HRM policies that were outdated and out of touch when faced with an urgent crisis situation. Moving forward, organizations must embrace a reimagined approach to HRM that embraces flexibility in where we work, how we work, how we evaluate productivity, and how these elements ultimately impact advancement opportunities to ensure equity and fairness for all employees. Most importantly, HRM must embrace empathy as a core value, recognizing the disparate impacts that accompany each level of intersectional difference for employees, and creating policies and cultures that accommodate the needs of employees within their individual, intersectional needs rather than a repackaging of policies and procedures that were designed for a very different workforce and very different work environment. Utilizing an intersectional framework to assess both organizational and employee needs ensures that no one falls through the cracks. Transformational leaders are in the best position to implement these strategies in an effort to progress social equity and inclusion.

Diggs et al. (Chapter 5) suggest that organizations focus on collaborations and outreach among employees and clients to increase opportunities

for expanded intersectional voices and experiences being considered, valued, and involved in the decision-making and implementation process, which ultimately will promote increased social equity and fairness in policies. They also argue that public sector organizations can enhance their performance by aligning their strategy with the organizational structure and culture and by overcoming hegemonic power dynamics and narratives that serve as barriers to a more intersectional management approach. They link their work to the evolution of laws meant to broaden fairness and equity. The realignment of organizational processes using an intersectional approach will allow organizations to analyze their policies at the meso and service level to ensure that they are neither exclusionary nor discriminatory.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this book is the development of a new crisis management model that is transformative in its integration and inclusion of varying intersectionalities. It is our hope that crisis managers will adopt this model to develop a more formalized approach to incorporating the intersectional constructs of attributes that comprise individuals and their communities. Each of the authors in this book has contributed to the relevance of these constructs in better serving society in crisis by framing key areas of opportunity to deploy intersectional analysis. The common connection that underscores each chapter is the foundational intersectional work of Crenshaw (1989, 1991, 2020) and the need to consider multiple identities and attributes as well as internal and external dynamics in society and the workplace. Ultimately, this book provides five overarching contributions to the literature and practice to help communities navigate crisis in a more equitable manner:

1. The identification of reflective discussion opportunities in this under-explored confluence of management and intersectional research and practice.
2. Recommendations for improving managers' intersectional analysis proficiency to better guide decision-making.
3. Specific recommendations for practice to help managers affect change in their organizations and communities to increase equitable practices.
4. The presentation of a new crisis management model that incorporates intersectionality with the intention of improving resilience – from planning to recovery.

Conclusion

The past 30 years have been filled with a growing understanding that intersectionality has significant implications for management. While we know a great deal about intersectionality, there is much to be done to apply it

meaningfully to address social, systemic, and structural inequality. We've initiated a conversation with the Integrative Crisis Management Model in order to address inequities that are magnified during times of crisis. We recognize that socially vulnerable and marginalized populations are at risk of greater adverse outcomes during times of crisis and we offer a path toward building more equitable practices. Disease, civil unrest, urbanization, the changing nature of work, and climate change are contributing to a new normal in today's workplace. Consequently, responding to this new normal with the transformative power of an intersectional crisis management framework is necessary if we are to successfully create more inclusive and integrative policies. This idea of a "*new normal*" also needs to be focused on our educational programs, changing our approaches to pedagogy in the same ways that HR is changing their approach to telecommuting and hybrid work, to digital access, and work-life balance. Broadening our understanding of intersectionality and how it impacts performance in the classroom will help change workplace dynamics, expand networks of opportunity, and increase opportunities for collaboration and engagement, which are so often built upon foundations of trust (Henson, 2019). Ultimately, attention to these concepts can also have long-term impacts on the development and transfer of professional norms for the next generation of leaders across the practitioner and academic spectrum (Diaz-Kope, Miller-Stevens, & Henley, 2019; Elias & D'Agostino, 2019; Evans, Irizarry, & Freeman, 2022).

At the same time, we must be cautious not to equate efforts to recognize and address intersectionality within our decision-making processes as simply efforts to increase diversity and help remove obstacles for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Those efforts are absolutely laudable, but true progress will also require us to shift outdated perceptions and expectations that are so often attached to how we relate to these attributes. For instance, we have focused quite a bit on the challenges of the new normal in terms of telecommuting or hybrid work and how it impacts women disproportionately in terms of inequity in childcare and household responsibilities – regardless of income. It is equally important to recognize the deeply embedded social construction and stigmas that need to be addressed to shift these expectations – such as the sometimes unspoken judgment against, for instance, heterosexual or gay men who are actively engaged in equitable sharing of parental responsibilities, taking advantage of paternity leave, or even being involved as a troop leader for daughters involved in something like Girl Scouts. This radical redefining of how to approach crisis management will symbolically reinforce our ideals and values, help build trust within and between organizations and sectors, and facilitate interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations throughout civil society. In doing so we will move away from marginalization of communities, reduce the intersectional overlapping of

burdens and barriers (Knepper, Sonenberg, & Levine, 2018), and establish a stronger foundation of resilience and preparedness to tackle the next crisis, be it natural disaster, global pandemic, or man-made.

Throughout this book we have discussed changing dynamics regarding the recognition of intersectionality, continually evolving definitions and expansions of cultural and social attributes, and some of the legal, social, and theoretical implications in both the academic and practitioner world. It is extremely encouraging to review the expansion of tolerance and inclusiveness and the progress that has already been made in new approaches to policy development, decision-making, and implementation, as well as the shifting narratives in social construction connected to intersectionality. At the same time, we must recognize that even the adoption of new approaches such as the Integrative Crisis Management Model does not mean it will automatically have the intended impact.

This book began by highlighting the theme that transformation can be, and is, a disruptive act – with the expected accompaniment of those who embrace change and those who are resistant. We recognize that generational shifts in social norms also play a significant role in how equity is understood and embraced as a moral obligation. To paraphrase Blessett (2020, p. 4), the integration of intersectionality in our understanding and management of crisis can be a powerful tool to “deconstruct and disarm” systemic inequalities linked to those intersectionalities. But we must also recognize that this is an ongoing process that will need to be continually addressed. We can, and should, learn from our past, develop new strategies, expand our outreach, and invite new voices into the discussions. At the same time, we must recognize that there will continue to be counter forces constantly pushing back, requiring us to continually adapt, adjust, and reimagine the possibilities – but with a vigilant eye toward building *a path to social equity*.

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