This response builds upon ideas introduced in Charity Hudley et al.’s (2020) target article by focusing on the themes of excellence and racial justice. In addition to relying on previous academic work on race and racism, I also draw from my own experiences as a person of color in the field of linguistics and as a scholar who works with racially minoritized communities. The primary claims of this paper are that the field of linguistics as a whole benefits from broadening and deepening our conceptualizations of scholarly excellence and from consciously attending to the needs and concerns of scholars and community members from racially minoritized groups. To support these claims, I discuss ways in which institutional structures of universities hinder equity and inclusion by marginalizing contributions of scholars from racially minoritized groups and by promoting extractive and neocolonial work involving minoritized communities. I conclude by offering general principles that can serve as guides for fostering greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in university settings. These principles involve acknowledging present shortcomings, aligning the reward system to a broadened notion of excellence and to inclusion, and embracing creative alternatives.

Keywords: race, racial justice, diversity, equity, inclusion

1. Introduction. The call for greater engagement with race and racism in the field of linguistics articulated in the LSA Statement on Race (Linguistic Society of America 2019) and in Charity Hudley et al. 2020 aligns with the goal expressed in many universities of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Though the rationale for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion is multifaceted, two primary motivations for doing so are connected to the notions of excellence and racial justice. Attending to the perspectives, goals, and needs of racially minoritized people—whether they be fellow scholars or members of communities with whom we work—results in more innovative, comprehensive, and responsible scholarship and contributes to a more just and fair society. The present paper builds upon ideas introduced by Charity Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz (2020) by focusing on the themes of excellence and racial justice.

In addition to relying on previous academic work on race and racism (both as it applies to linguistics and more generally), this paper also draws from my own experiences as a person of color in the field of linguistics and as a scholar who works with racially minoritized communities. Though we must guard against assuming the experiences of scholars of color are monolithic and thereby ignoring the diversity found within groups, drawing upon the lived experiences of linguists from racially minoritized groups helps to move us forward in two ways. First, understanding what it is like for people who are faculty members or students of color in linguistics allows us to identify more precisely the specific obstacles and concerns that we need to understand and address. Second, providing a forum for linguists of color to voice their thoughts and ideas fosters an environment of greater inclusiveness.

The primary claims of the paper are that the field of linguistics as a whole benefits from broadening and deepening our conceptualizations of scholarly excellence and from consciously attending to the needs and concerns of scholars and community members from racially minoritized groups. A crucial step in achieving these goals is to identify the institutional structures in our universities that act as barriers to scholarly
excellence and to more ethical engagement with racially minoritized individuals. In addition, though the focus is on the experiences of people of color, many of the issues raised are likely to resonate more broadly with others who have also experienced institutional barriers to inclusion. Thus, working on making the institution more responsive to the needs and interests of people of color will contribute to making the institution more responsive generally to anyone who encounters these obstacles.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: I first briefly present my background and positionality, as well as an argument for the inclusion of this information about myself in a scholarly paper (§2). Section 3 then focuses on obstacles to equity and inclusion in the academy generally and in the field of linguistics. Section 3.1 explores ways in which the contributions of scholars from racially minoritized groups are marginalized, §3.2 addresses institutional structures that contribute to this marginalization, and §3.3 focuses on how work involving minoritized communities is often extractive and neocolonial. I offer recommendations for reconfiguring certain institutional structures to make them more equitable and inclusive in §4, and then conclude (§5).

2. Positionality.

2.1. Rationale for presenting scholar’s background. Given that I am drawing on my own experiences as a linguist of color, it is important to present some parts of my background in order to help readers contextualize my viewpoints. This is done in the spirit of transparency and in recognition of the idea that our backgrounds influence our academic choices. It is important for us to acknowledge that we as academics operate with ideologies that we are not necessarily aware of (e.g. Collins 1992) and that these ideologies are not necessarily shared by all scholars, let alone by nonacademics. Indeed, the belief that researchers can operate from a purely objective perspective is one institutional obstacle to greater inclusiveness in academia, since it sets one perspective as a default and marks others in relation to that default. Yet, it is important ‘to acknowledge the political agenda of purportedly scientific scholarship’ (Charity Hudley et al. 2020: e204). Therefore, explicitly acknowledging our backgrounds is an important step both toward more explicitly recognizing that all scholarship is shaped in part by the experiences of the researcher and toward appreciating the value that comes from listening to a greater diversity of perspectives.

Moreover, explicitly referencing a researcher’s background in an academic paper serves another purpose: it incorporates alternative modes of disseminating information, modes that are often more aligned to those used by many racially minoritized groups. For example, many Indigenous scholars include autobiography in their theorizing (e.g. Wilson 2008), and storytelling represents a critical feature of Indigenous research paradigms (Iseke 2013). In addition, storytelling as a feature of scholarship is also characteristic of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic 1993). By broadening our notion of what an academic paper looks like, we can begin to make our scholarship more inclusive of different types of epistemologies, methodologies, sources of data, and forms of presentation.

2.2. My background. In addition to my relatively conventional training in linguistics, my work as a linguist is also informed by my experiences as a Latinx (specifically Mexican-American) individual. I was born in Southern New Mexico and was raised in a very small town on the border of the United States and Mexico. Spanish is my first language, and I began learning English upon entering kindergarten. When I was thirteen, my parents separated and I moved with my mother, grandmother, and brothers to a low-income housing project in the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area. In the
process, we also moved from a bicultural border community to one where nonmainstream White cultures were marginalized. After high school, I attended an Ivy League college that had very limited numbers of Black, Latinx, or Indigenous students.

Upon graduating from college, I embarked on a career as a primary school teacher and worked in a variety of settings in elementary and middle schools, including an urban public school serving primarily immigrant children and a private school serving children of wealthy and influential parents. After several years as a teacher, I entered a Ph.D. program in linguistics. My first direct experience with research in linguistics was as a research assistant for a project that explored the contact effects of Spanish in New York City by analyzing corpus data. Subsequent research and volunteer work put me in direct contact with members of various speech communities. These experiences were the beginning of my engagement with a community-based participatory research approach that characterizes my current scholarship—which focuses on Native American languages and on language revitalization and reclamation—as a tenure track faculty member. Thus, my perspectives on race and racism in linguistics are based both on intellectual engagement with the topic and on personal experiences as a racially minoritized scholar and as a scholar who works with racially minoritized groups.

3. Obstacles to equity and inclusion. Certainly, marginalization of racially minoritized individuals represents an issue that our society in general is grappling with. Therefore, one avenue we should pursue in order to address racism in linguistics is to connect to broader antiracist efforts, which is one of the calls to action proposed by Charity Hudley et al. Another avenue is to look inward, by reflecting critically on the assumptions and structures of the institutions we are affiliated with (which, for me and for many readers of Language, are colleges and universities) and considering how we can reimagine those institutions as more open and inclusive to divergent ways of thinking and researching.

3.1. Marginalization of contributions by scholars from racially minoritized groups. As mentioned in §2.1, all scholarship is shaped at least in part by the background of the scholar. Though we must be careful to avoid an essentialist perspective that automatically ascribes diverse ways of thinking to researchers from diverse backgrounds, it is important to recognize that individuals with positionalities that are different from the majority are likely to offer epistemologies, methodologies, sources of data, and research questions that have received minimal, if any, previous serious attention in academia. As the LSA Statement on Race points out, ‘The critical knowledge and knowledge systems of scholars from backgrounds underrepresented in higher education are invaluable to the study of language’ (Linguistic Society of America 2019). Scholars from diverse backgrounds, therefore, bring with them the possibility of engaging in innovative scholarship that helps to broaden and deepen the field.

Research informed by novel knowledge and knowledge systems is one way in which scholarship can be cutting edge. Other ways to do innovative scholarship are by reassessing the core of a field, pushing at its margins, and marshaling insights from outside of the field. As a result of their familiarity with occupying marginal spaces, scholars of color are often likely to be more critical of existing epistemologies, methodologies, and research questions, particularly as they relate to research involving racially minoritized groups. This certainly was my own experience. Though I began my graduate studies with the intention of learning the conventional theories and tools of the field, as I learned more about them, I began to question their assumptions and their applications. In addition, though I intended to conduct relatively conventional theoretical
research, I soon shifted toward more community-oriented work, and ultimately found that work in language revitalization and reclamation was the best fit for me in part because of its potential for being of meaningful service to marginalized communities. I gravitated toward marginality in various forms, a move that was shaped in part by my own lived experiences as a member of marginalized groups. Other scholars of color I have spoken with have expressed a similar connection between their lived experiences in the margins and boundary-pushing in their scholarship.

Depending on the nature of the innovation, some scholars are able to conduct groundbreaking research within the existing bounds of the university. This might be the case, for instance, with scholarship that applies existing theories to a novel population. However, it is also often the case that innovation comes in ways that are completely unexpected and that challenge well-established conventions; indeed, this is often the nature of divergent thinking. Because this kind of cutting-edge scholarship does often challenge basic assumptions and methodologies of the field and the institution, it can sometimes clash with basic institutional structures. Examples of such structures that I have experienced as an academic linguist of color include an unexamined notion of what quality scholarship entails; output expectations that are relatively inflexible with regard to time; scarcity of established information-dissemination mechanisms (and relative lack of prestige of those that do exist); and the compartmentalization of teaching, research, and service.\(^1\) I address each of these in turn.

As mentioned above, cutting-edge scholarship often involves not simply distinctive topics but also distinctive epistemologies and methodologies, ones that often run counter to conventional ways of knowing and researching. Scholars who come from nonconventional backgrounds may struggle with reconciling their knowledge systems with those of the academy. Though some can readily embrace the conventional epistemologies and methodologies (either by replacement of the former with the latter or by engaging in a kind of intellectual code-switching), others find the two irreconcilable and choose to leave the academy. Yet others commit to broadening the scope of existing knowledge by producing scholarship informed by previously overlooked ways of knowing, often guided by the understanding that the conventional approach is connected to historical power imbalances. That scholars from nonconventional backgrounds have to resolve these incongruities is one significant obstacle to innovation, since this requires significant time, effort, and emotional energy.

Another issue related to this is the fact that engaging with novel epistemologies and methodologies often means becoming a pioneer. In part, this involves understanding existing frameworks well enough to be sanctioned to speak as a scholar and to effectively critique the dominant paradigms. Such an undertaking requires constant negotiation in order to determine what components of existing knowledge systems are worthy of keeping and which must be actively challenged. For instance, Leonard (2008) discusses how for some sleeping Indigenous languages, constructs from linguistics can be useful for supporting the goals of Indigenous communities seeking to revitalize their languages, while other constructs are tied to ideologies that are damaging to these communities. Determining what to embrace and what to discard requires additional intellectual effort typically not expected of those adopting dominant paradigms. Moreover,

\(^1\) Though the focus here is on marginalization of scholars from racially minoritized groups with regard to their scholarship, it should be noted that a multitude of other factors—such as lack of mentorship, isolation, tokenization, and so forth (Turner et al. 2008)—are also crucial to address if we are to make meaningful progress toward equity and inclusion for scholars of color.
scholars engaging in these kinds of intellectual maneuverings often must do so with few if any models or mentors to guide them, which adds to the amount of work required and can also be lonely and dispiriting.

Further, given that such scholars are forging uncharted paths, there is no guarantee that their destination will offer a new and inspiring vista. Indeed, not all innovative thinking will necessarily be groundbreaking. Thus, engaging in this kind of research is risky, putting the scholar in a precarious position. Yet, for scholars committed to working with nonmainstream epistemologies, methodologies, or research questions, the personal and intellectual rewards of engaging in scholarship they find meaningful and relevant serve as crucial motivators for continuing to do this work. Supporting such scholars is also in the best interests of the academy. Not only does this lead to a more inclusive environment, but these scholars also bring the possibility of broadening and deepening our current paradigms and of encouraging more innovative research by all.

3.2. Institutional structures that act as obstacles. One of the major structural obstacles of the institution is connected to limitations related to time. Though expectations about the pace of one’s work affect scholars regardless of their backgrounds, these can be a particularly formidable challenge depending on one’s scholarship. Research that is in some way marginal in the field involves greater up-front investments. When one cannot rely heavily on well-established theories and methodologies, one requires extra time to formulate a research agenda. For instance, a researcher engaged in interdisciplinary work that brings together insights from different fields needs to understand the various perspectives of those fields and to determine ways in which they can be reconciled. In addition, scholars working with marginalized communities in particular must grapple with an academic timeline that is not aligned with the needs and interests of the community. For instance, many Indigenous people are often hesitant to work with institutions such as universities given the exploitative way research has been (and continues to be) conducted on them (Smith 2012); indeed, this colonial legacy is also very much a part of the field of linguistics (Errington 2008). Their hesitation is certainly understandable, and a responsible researcher must invest time and energy both to establish trust and to learn enough about the community’s needs, priorities, interests, and ways of knowing in order to conduct ethical, relevant, and insightful research.

Though time expectations are present at various levels of the academy, the primary place where such expectations are most rigid is with regard to the granting of tenure. Compared to, for example, the promotion of associate to full professor, there is virtually no flexibility with regard to how long junior faculty have to produce a particular quantity of publications in order to keep their jobs. As a result, the admonition to ‘wait until after tenure’ is particularly potent for junior faculty with the drive to engage in innovative and/or community-oriented work that requires more time. Such an exhortation—which is tied to the very problematic notion that equal means equitable, without recognizing that some scholarship inherently takes longer—has the potential to stifle cutting-edge work, to further alienate scholars who do not feel connected to conventional research paradigms, and to lead to work with racially minoritized communities that does not respect their priorities. Moreover, by connecting the awarding of tenure to conventional standards and expectations, it challenges the established view that tenure is about the need for academic freedom in order for scholars to pursue whatever research agendas they see fit.

Another institutional obstacle to excellence is an overreliance on conventional mechanisms for the dissemination of information. Given that research based in diverse
knowledge systems often occurs at the margins of a given field and engages with understudied ideas, the well-known, high-prestige journals in the field do not tend to embrace work that deviates significantly from the articles that have historically been published in those journals. This is mostly of concern because of the reliance on the prestige of publication venue in reward structures of universities, whether for admission, hiring, promotion, or tenure. A rigid view of what counts as a worthwhile kind of publication limits the possibilities of what scholars choose to engage in and is punitive to scholars who do engage in work that results in unconventional products.

In this regard, as suggested by Charity Hudley et al., one subfield of linguistics that has begun expanding the way excellence is perceived is the subfield of language revitalization and reclamation. For instance, the LSA statement entitled ‘Evaluation of language documentation for hiring, tenure, and promotion’ (Linguistic Society of America 2018) recognizes the value of work that supports the needs of the community. Notably, it does so by explicitly referring to the scholarly merit of such work, and it recommends the recognition of alternative forms of publication (such as digital media or pedagogical materials) as scholarly contributions just as worthy of serving as evaluation metrics for scholars as conventional publications. Recognizing that excellence involves expanding our notions of what worthwhile scholarship is will allow us to first imagine and then implement more diverse information-dissemination practices that support divergent, innovative work. Doing so will support not only scholars from minoritized groups who are connected to different knowledge systems but also all scholars who are engaging in cutting-edge research.

One way in which the introduction of new approaches to knowledge affects the academy is by challenging conventional boundaries between disciplines. Other boundaries that are often challenged by scholars from racially minoritized communities or those who work with racially minoritized communities are the boundaries between the three distinct types of tasks that define professors’ (and in many cases, graduate students’) work: research, teaching, and service. There are a multitude of ways in which work in one area can overlap with another area. For instance, individuals working on decolonization in their research also actively apply principles of decolonization in their teaching, and scholars engaged in community-based participatory research necessarily engage in service as they conduct their research.

I can illustrate this blurring of boundaries through my involvement with our newly established Numu (Northern Paiute) classes at the University of Nevada, Reno. The idea for offering these classes came from a student who was also a local tribal member. Together with this student, another faculty member and I developed a proposal for the World Languages and Literatures Department to offer classes in Numu that would satisfy the language requirement for students. The proposal involved researching other university-level Indigenous language classes, developing course syllabi, and assessing potential interest. The instructor we found for the class is an elder who had at various points worked both with the student and with me. Though the elder is the instructor of record, I also attend classes and offer significant instructional and administrative support both during class and outside of class. In addition, throughout the process, I have been working on how various details of this process relate to ideas of decolonization, language vitality, and language reclamation, with the intention of producing a scholarly paper.

My involvement with this class, therefore, connects to research, teaching, and service. A challenge with this kind of work, however, is that because it does not fit the conventional view of what scholarship should be, it is often difficult to classify using conventional categories. Unfortunately, the impulse can be to relegate it to the domain
of service, which is the least valued of the three roles of a faculty member, which is particularly problematic for people of color since they are often the ones that are already overburdened with service (Turner et al. 2008). Conventional boundaries in the structures of academia—including but not limited to boundaries between fields and professional roles as discussed above—are among the barriers to the kind of work scholars from racially minoritized groups tend to gravitate toward.

All in all, a reassessment of the conventional assumptions of the academy regarding time expectations, acceptable means of distribution of information, and rigid boundaries in various domains of the institution can improve the quality and breadth of scholarship that is conducted in universities. Doing so would recognize and valorize the contributions that scholars from racially minoritized backgrounds often bring to the field. Moreover, respecting these intellectual contributions also fosters racial justice. After all, if an institution claiming to value diversity and inclusion recruits scholars from diverse backgrounds, then for that institution to admit or hire these individuals and not respect their contributions is to set them up for failure and for the institution to miss out on precisely the opportunity it was looking for in diversifying its faculty and student body.

3.3. Ways in which work with racially marginalized communities can be exploitative. The focus of the previous section is on potential harms to the scholar, and the focus of this section is on potential harms to communities, though there is naturally overlap between the two. For instance, communities and scholars alike are hurt by conventional ideologies and practices that undervalue community-based work designed to directly serve communities or work that is significantly driven by the knowledge systems of those communities. Many of the illustrative examples I offer in this section are based on my work with Native American communities. Though Native American communities face distinct linguistic issues relative to African-American and Latinx groups (e.g. the significant endangerment of Native American languages versus the linguistic connection of African-American and Latinx linguistic varieties to world languages), an important commonality is the fact that research on all three groups often fails to consider their needs, interests, knowledge systems, and priorities, thereby making this kind of research extractive and exploitative in minor and major ways.

As Charity Hudley et al. point out, racist ideologies of linguistics today are rooted in its history as a tool of colonialism. Earlier linguistic work on the languages of racially minoritized people was conducted by colonial agents who supported (sometimes unintentionally but often actively) colonial goals focusing on enhancing the power of the empire, including spreading religion and exploiting colonized people and resources for commercial purposes (Errington 2008). Though the explicit goal of linguists today may not be directly tied to commercial or religious motivations, many practices and assumptions about language and linguistic analysis persist, which continue to reinforce the colonial legacy of the field (Leonard 2017). This can be seen, for instance, in the way that linguistic research often reduces an individual’s background, identity, and experiences to a count in a statistical analysis (Charity Hudley et al. 2020).

Work on racially minoritized communities that mines their linguistic knowledge (such as through collecting grammaticality judgments for syntactic analysis, spoken tokens and utterances for phonetic and phonological analysis, paradigm elicitations for morphological analysis, etc.) without taking into account their beliefs, needs, or interests is inherently extractive. If we use the intellectual and cultural resources of a community as data to produce academic publications that are inaccessible to the community and that directly benefit only scholars and academic institutions, then we are perpetuating a colonial legacy. This is not to say that all such work is exploitative at the local
level. Certainly, at least in my experience with documentation of endangered languages, consultants are compensated and they are often very eager to work with researchers. I know many linguists of Indigenous languages who have excellent relationships with the communities they work with. Though this does help to bring at least a little more balance to an inherently unequal power dynamic, it does not, however, change the prevailing ideology that academic knowledge systems are superior to the knowledge systems of the communities themselves. Moreover, given that this ideology is pervasive outside of academia as well, some community members themselves may simply accept extractive work as the norm. This—coupled with the fact that incentive systems for scholars deprioritize work that directly serves communities—ensures that knowledge, resources, and gains move consistently in one direction: from the community to the academy. Countering this type of neocolonial relationship requires actively working against the inertia of the status quo.

4. Recommendations for solutions. In this section, I briefly offer three general principles drawn from the discussion above that can serve as guides for developing solutions. A genuine effort at supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of linguistics requires addressing the issues from multiple angles. Given the scope of this paper, the recommendations outlined below focus on how linguists associated with universities can contribute to improving excellence and racial justice in their institutions. These recommended solutions are meant to be undertaken in conjunction with efforts from other related stakeholders, such as, for instance, the LSA (see Charity Hudley et al. 2020 for recommendations targeted to the LSA). Though some of the recommendations involve restructuring parts of the institution, they are framed as broad principles that all individuals who have any kind of decision-making or advisory responsibility in an institution (e.g. serving on admission or hiring or dissertation committees, voting on promotion and tenure, contributing to discussions on department policies and procedures, mentoring students or junior faculty, etc.) can employ. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 consolidate much of what is discussed above, and §4.3 discusses several more concrete solutions.

4.1. Acknowledge present shortcomings. Acknowledging ways in which current institutional structures fall short of supporting meaningful work by and with minoritized people is a critical initial step. Not only does doing so pave the way for addressing these shortcomings, but it also validates the experiences of individuals from racially minoritized groups. As mentioned in §3.1, individuals who come to academia with access to and familiarity with knowledge systems distinct from the mainstream often struggle to reconcile the intellectual assumptions of the academy with those of their own backgrounds. Especially given the formidable underrepresentation of African-American, Latinx, and Native American individuals at all levels of the academy (Charity Hudley et al. 2020, Linguistic Society of America 2019), this can lead to feelings of isolation and alienation that then lead to self-doubt and impostor syndrome, feelings that are exacerbated when scholars’ intellectual contributions are marginalized. Recognizing in an official capacity (e.g. exemplified by the LSA Statement on Race) that many institutional structures continue to reflect a legacy of racism, white supremacy, and colonization validates the lived experiences of people of color while also alerting all of us to the work that needs to be done to ensure greater racial justice in our institutions.

4.2. Align the reward system to a broadened notion of excellence and to inclusion. Equipped with at least a preliminary awareness of the problematic institutional structures of universities that contribute to holding back scholars of color and innovative scholarship more generally, individuals committed to scholarly excellence and
ethical treatment of people of color can begin to undertake actions small and large to make their immediate environment more inclusive. The institution’s most powerful tool for maintaining the status quo and replicating its structures is its reward system, which includes admission into graduate programs, hiring, tenure and promotion, and other awards that confer prestige and often financial remuneration. If we understand that many aspects of the status quo perpetuate inequity, then we can begin to consider how relying on narrow and unjust notions of ‘standards’ to judge others perpetuates the racist and colonial legacy of the institution that formulated those standards. Even if these institutional structures cannot be changed quickly, acknowledging how they disproportionately impact individuals from racially minoritized communities contributes to a greater sense of justice in the institution and to openness to the kind of divergent thinking that broadens and deepens the quality of scholarship.

4.3. Embrace creative alternatives. Just as conceptualizing excellence more expansively allows for engagement with epistemologies and methodologies that have heretofore been absent from conventional academic discourse, so too the commitment to greater racial justice produces opportunities for reimaging the reward systems of academia and for articulating precisely why we value constructs such as publication, prestige, and peer review.

The reason publication is a critical component of an academic’s job is because of the role of the academy as a source of new knowledge. The essence of publication is dissemination of knowledge and participation in larger intellectual conversations. Especially for scholars working with innovative epistemologies and methodologies, therefore, publication is an essential component of their work aimed at diversifying what counts as valid knowledge and knowledge systems. In this regard, the goals of the institution and those of scholars are well aligned. The main points of misalignment, though, involve the narrow parameters of the academy with regard to what information dissemination should look like and to how and when it should occur. For instance, as mentioned in §3.2, there are rather inflexible time restrictions tied to the evaluation process for tenure that particularly disadvantage novel, interdisciplinary, or community-based work. Though the goal of publication supports the interests of both the academy and the individual scholar, the requirement that it happen at a rigidly defined pace does not serve the scholar engaged with innovative or divergent scholarship, and it is also unclear how much the institution gains through that inflexibility. By granting some flexibility with regard to time (e.g. in the form of course releases, extension of the tenure clock, or counting necessary and important work preliminary to publication as scholarship itself), the institution can support scholars working in underserved research areas while still valorizing information dissemination and intellectual engagement with others.

In addition, if information dissemination and intellectual engagement are the ultimate goals for scholarship, then we should reconsider how that relates to conventional notions of what counts as a prestigious publication venue. Innovative epistemologies and methodologies call for innovative forms of publication. As mentioned in §3.2, the field of language revitalization and reclamation has already begun to expand the notion of what counts as meaningful publication (to include, for instance, electronic collections, websites, and pedagogical materials). In doing so, the LSA has acknowledged that this type of work represents ‘intellectual achievements which require sophisticated analytical skills, deep theoretical knowledge, and broad linguistic expertise’ (Linguistic Society of America 2011). Such a statement is firmly grounded in an expanded conceptualization of excellence that is argued for in this paper. Moreover, it is a statement that includes not only acknowledgments of shortcomings but also concrete remedies. This type of resourceful commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion can serve as a model.
for the rest of the field of linguistics and for academia more generally to reconsider what prestige in publication means.

One objection that might be raised with regard to alternative publication venues is that they do not meet the standards of peer review, which plays a critical role in the evaluation of academic products. Its role as one of the main gatekeepers of the institution reflects a desire for a fair and democratic process: the quality of scholarship in a given field is determined by fellow experts whose own work is also subject to this process. In order for this process to truly be fair and democratic, though, we must explore who a peer is and who an expert is. This is especially the case with scholars from underrepresented backgrounds who are working with distinct knowledge systems, since such scholars are extremely underrepresented in the field in general, let alone as senior scholars. If evaluators are operating primarily from a mainstream perspective, then peer review runs the risk of disfavoring (perhaps just at the subconscious level in many cases) scholarship that is unfamiliar. When assessing divergent scholarship, it is therefore important to remember that peer review is not always as fair and democratic as might be believed.

In addition, particularly with scholarship involving nonmainstream knowledge systems or with community-based work, experts whose input is invaluable for determining the quality of one’s work are members of the communities themselves. Just as we can begin to consider a broader notion of publication, we can also develop a broader notion of peer review. In the field of language revitalization, for example, peer review can include the voices of tribal members and native speakers of languages with which the linguist works. In this way, a significant marker of the prestige of a scholar’s work can be signaled by approval of the work by the community (as manifested, for example, through formal recognition of the work by tribal leaders, distribution in tribal venues, or co-authorship with community members). Rather than challenging the value of publication, prestige, and peer review, solutions such as these actually connect more deeply to the spirit behind these concepts and support the university’s mission of knowledge production and democratic education.

5. Conclusion. The experiences of linguists from racially minoritized groups speak to the need to more directly confront the racist legacy of the field and the university. Thankfully, publications such as the LSA Statement on Race and papers in this volume indicate that we have begun to do so. The major claims of the present paper are that doing so offers an invaluable opportunity for the field and for universities to broaden and deepen the values of the academy. Committing to genuine diversity, equity, and inclusion necessitates confronting the existing institutional structures that significantly limit the contributions that scholars working with novel epistemologies and methodologies can bring to the enterprise of knowledge creation. It means challenging the inertia of the status quo by exploring and refining our sense of the essential values of the academy. Doing this difficult work of grappling with the ways in which racist and colonialist ideologies and practices continue to impact scholars and scholarship promises a future that is more equitable and inclusive and that fosters both excellence and racial justice.

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