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Article

Toward a New Approach for "Swift Futuring:" With a Use Case of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)

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Abstract

This study advances a new approach called "swift futuring" in response to the question: How might organizational stakeholders collectively define, influence, and reach a bold, even audacious, preferred future three to five years out, under significant existential pressures and time constraints? Storytelling in the form of antenarratives and scenario development is core to the model. After describing swift futuring, the study offers U.S. minority serving institutions (MSIs) as a potential use case. The study concludes with recommendations for practice and research, including an invitation for scholarly debate over the usefulness of the approach in light of the broader futures literature and current needs.

Keywords

Futuring, Minority Serving Institutions, Scenario, Organizational Change

Introduction

We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories. – Gottschall (2012)

"Swift futuring," a storytelling framework introduced in this study, addresses the question: How might organizational stakeholders collectively define, influence, and reach a bold, even audacious, preferred future three to five years out, under significant existential pressures and time constraints? I advance swift futuring in the spirit of "experiment[ing] with new methodologies and rigorous tools, which allow for a better exploration of possible futures" due to "rapid changes currently being experienced" (Pinto & Medina, 2020, p. 288; see also, Colville et al., 2012). Underlying swift futuring are two crucial assumptions: One, an organization can act its way into meaning (Bruner, 1990; Colville et al., 2011); and two, although humans are natural storytellers, additional knowledge and skills are needed to maximize its value for organizational futuring (Fergnani, 2019; Lane, 2023; Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015). Given that many futuring approaches look ahead 10, 50 or even 100 years (Bezold, 2009; Clardy, 2022; Hines et al., 2019), the hope is that swift futuring's near-term focus will add a useful near-term tool to the over half-century of rich narrative or scenario-based foresight literature (Kahn & Wiener, 1967; Dator, 2002; Inayatullah, 1998; Inayatullah et al., 2022) and participatory future workshop approaches by the likes of Robert Jungk and Norbert Müllert dating to the 1960s and 70s that remain in use today (Robert Jungk Memorial Library, 2023).

I also provide U.S. minority serving institutions (MSIs) as a use case for swift futuring. MSIs are a subset of some 700+ colleges and universities including Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); Asian American, Native American and Pacific-Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs); Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs); Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). MSIs often must manage the same rapid pace of change facing U.S. higher education broadly, while grappling with special questions of relevance, identity, mission, and vision on more urgent timelines compared to many non-MSIs peers.

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This study is the first to extend the MSI literature into the field of futuring, which is significant as MSIs represent certain underrepresented and marginalized communities that have been historically left out of futures conversations (Davis, 2022). In the same way Thomas (2021) asked, "How long 'til Black Future Month?" (p. 393), one can ask how long 'til a futuring framework is applied to an MSI context? Never has this question been more important than now, particularly in light of unknowns regarding how the recent United States Supreme Court's ruling on June 29, 2023 against race-conscious college admissions might impact MSIs and questions regarding the under-resourcing of many MSIs.

Although the present study's application of a futuring framework to MSIs is new, the decades of futures studies and practice has advocated for the diversification of alternative futures (Galtung, 1971; Jae, 2023). Sangchai (1974) advocated for Western-trained futurists to supplement their outer-orientation with an Eastern inner-orientation. Sangchai contended that the West's overstressing of a scientifically or technically sophisticated future comes at the expense of human dimensions (spiritual, philosophical, religious), which an Eastern orientation can supply. Reading Dator's 2005 essay on de-colonizing the future, adapted from a piece he wrote in 1975, one can easily see the merits of an inner-orientation. Many contemporary influencers hold immense power without accountability partly "because no one from the future can hold them accountable for their acts" (Dator, 2005, p. 95). A proper inner-orientation, inclusive of contemplative introspection, is needed. These calls align with Inayatullah and some fifty other futurists who contributed to a special 1996 double issue of *Futures* entitled, What Futurists Think. Inayatullah (1996) wrote, "Futurists need to create projects that are more cross-cultural, gender-balanced, epistemologically rich and that approach the Other within the categories of the Other" (p. 509). The current study builds on these vital traditions of inner-orientation, dissent and decolonized futures practice by extending it to MSIs as some of the most important modern sites of individual and collective intellectual and psycho-social resistance of minorities people in the U.S. today.

The study concludes with recommendations for practice and research, including an invitation for scholarly debate.

Description of Swift Futuring

Figure 1 depicts swift futuring, a process by which a committed collective of institutional stakeholders can use storytelling to prototype and move with relative quickness to a near-term preferred future.

Before examining Figure 1, I should introduce a primary source of inspiration for the concept: Barker and Gower's (2010) notion of "swift communication." Swift communication was introduced to help multinational businesses develop shared cultures and realize collective goals under technology-induced time constraints that previous generations did not face. Barker and Gower (2010) explained:

> …the extended time formerly used to assimilate to new ventures and new cultures is no longer a luxury available to the competitive business entity. Rather, businesses must find their way toward a "swift communication" environment in an attempt to help all members, regardless of where they fall in the organization diversity continuum, understand each other and work together, thereby helping the organization to achieve its competitive goals (p. 299).

The sections to follow offer an introduction to swift futuring, keyed to Figure 1, beginning with the notion of time.

Notion of time

Although time is not explicitly named as a standalone feature of Figure 1, it is core to swift futuring in at least two ways: the *process of organizational becoming* and the goal of the *preferred future*. I will discuss the latter first as it represents the goal of the model.

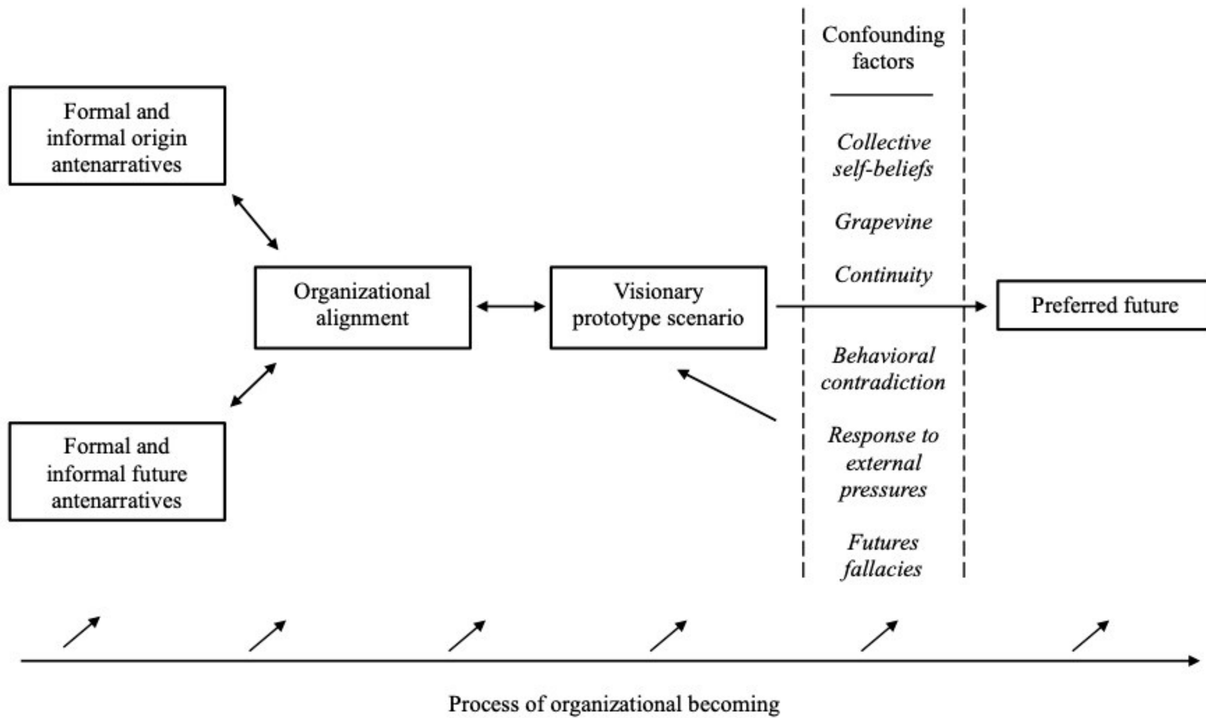

Fig. 1: Swift futuring

Preferred future

Figure 1 displays the *preferred future* in the box at the far-right side of the model. The primary goal of swift futuring is arrival at a future that is collectively-envisioned and preferred over other possible futures. Another term for preferred future is "aspirational vision" (Bezold, 2009; Clardy, 2022; Hines & Bishop, 2013). For a vision to be counted as aspirational, stakeholders must understand the possibilities of what might happen and possess a clear, shared commitment to creating it (Bezold, 2009). "Preferred" implies that an undesirable future is possible, and that a measure of collective agency and self-directedness will be necessary. Because a certain version of the future is preferred over others, it is essential for stakeholders to take an active role.

As indicated, the swift futuring approach is designed for a relatively near-term *time horizon*. A time horizon is "how far one is intending to look into the future" (Hines & Bishop, 2013, p. 33), or "that distance into the future to which a decision-maker looks when evaluating the consequences of a proposed action" (Elbert & Piehl, 1973, p. 35). From start to finish, Figure 1 is best suited for efforts that look no more than three to five years ahead, or even as little as 12-18 months in advance. The relative brevity conceptualized in Figure 1 distinguishes swift futuring from most other futuring efforts, which look ahead decades (Bezold, 2009; Clardy, 2022; Hines et al., 2019).

Given this short time horizon, how bold or audacious could the preferred future in Figure 1 really be? Bezold (2009) observes rightly that many short-term futuring efforts aim too low. A longer time horizon does introduce greater potential for larger visions and more variability of outcomes (Hines & Bishop, 2013), but a shorter time horizon does not automatically mean playing it safe. On the contrary, the swift futuring model is most appropriate when significant change is needed in response to existential pressures and time constraints that are not offering the luxury of more time. The MSI use case offered later is an example.

Process of organizational becoming

The second time-related concept in swift futuring is the process of organizational becoming. This process is depicted by the left-to-right arrow running along the bottom of Figure 1. It refers to the collective evolution from the starting state to the preferred or aspirational state. Organizational becoming is what happens with the organization (noun)

organizes (verb) (Colville et al., 2011). Organizational becoming is a question of ontology (Carlsen, 2006), and two underlying ideas are salient: becoming through an incremental process over time (*chronos*), and becoming through an opportune moment (*kairos*) within time (*chronos*).

Regarding the first idea, becoming through an incremental process over time (*chronos*), swift futuring holds that reaching a preferred future does not often occur at a single point in time on a particular calendar date. Although epochal (sudden, dramatic) transformation is possible, incremental transformation is the norm. A corollary is found in Mezirow's (1998) transformative education theory. In practical terms, incremental becoming means an organization will look and behave as expected from one day to the next so that many times change will be imperceptible.

This degree of predictability is detrimental only if stakeholders are lulled into a false belief that nothing is happening. When leveraged appropriately during swift futuring efforts, day-to-day predictability provides a net of stability and safety amidst transformative change. No great human organization is built, or meets its demise, in a single day. That is true even in a futuring approach that emphasizes swiftness. Attention paid to reading the dashboard of the present moment, and both recognizing and instituting small or incremental adjustments accordingly, is more important to reaching the aspirational vision than calling for disruption overnight.

This emphasis on increments poses an apparent contradiction to swift futuring, but not a real one. It simply highlights the importance of *consistency* (of vision, of policy, of intervention, of behavior). Assuming broad participation, which I discuss later, consistency is the single most potent lever for an organization to reach its aspirational vision compared to any other. Carlsen (2006) observed, "We are what we do, and how we talk and think about what we do" (p. 146), also noting that acts of individual and collective authoring are "situated in everyday work" (p. 132). Incremental consistency is essential regardless of whether the aspirational vision is one year or 20 years out.

Crucially, swift futuring does leave room for the possibility of the opportune moment (*kairos*) where a change might occur in more epochal fashion. While these opportune moments are not the norm, it is vital to be looking out for their appearance as they provide potential inflection points where the organization can make leaps of greater magnitude compared to what is expected day-to-day. These moments can be subtle and easy to miss, or they can be apparent to everyone, as in a major crisis. If significant enough, they might even usher in a new era, though that might be difficult to discern in the moment (Hines & Bishop, 2013). It is also entirely possible that a swift futuring cycle will occur without a single observable *kairos*. The point is not whether an opportune moment arises, but whether an organization's stakeholders are ready to react if it does.

These aspects of swift futuring—preferred future and process of becoming—both point to the relevance of time in the equation. An organization whose stakeholders feel a sense of collective urgency, and who are willing to attune themselves to the challenges and opportunities associated with time, might find good outcomes with this approach. It is also worth noting that, in final analysis, Figure 1 belies the reality that change is constant, not a one-time destination. As Carlsen (2006) has noted, "[W]e are forever arriving" (p. 146).

Antenarratives, organizational alignment, and visionary prototype scenario development

The next three components of swift futuring are tightly interrelated so it is advantageous to address them together: antenarratives, organizational alignment, and visionary prototype scenario development. The bi-directional arrows signify that an organization moves through these stages iteratively as stakeholders reach agreement (alignment) on where they are going and how they will get there. Storytelling is the root activity of swift futuring from antenarratives (i.e., the stories before the story (Boje et al., 2016)) to full visionary prototype scenario development (i.e., the refined shared story). Before discussing the specific relationship of storytelling to the components of Figure 1, some foundational context about the centrality of *storytelling as a common practice* in the human experience is necessary.

Telling stories is innately human (Cragan & Shields, 1998; Kelly & Zak, 1999). Some scholars refer to us as *homo narrans*, humans-as-storytellers (Kelly & Zak, 1999). Stories serve as an existential compass by helping us make sense of what we are, where we come from, and what we want to be (Boje, 1995; Soin & Scheytt, 2006). The utility of stories crosses many fields from law (Kelly & Zak, 1999) to science (Sheehan & Rode, 1999). Science

often employs forms of storytelling due to the fact that stories provide a useful rhetorical pattern for conveying experiences with phenomena (Sheehan & Rode, 1999).

Many historically minoritized racial and ethnic groups rely heavily on storytelling, especially oral tradition, to ground themselves in a collective past and provide a sense of unified purpose. Thomas (2021) has written about how, for many Black people, "In the midst of constant dehumanization, Black storytelling has long served as catharsis, vehicle for cultural transmission, community builder, and, maybe most importantly, a source of hope" (p. 396). Rebolledo (1990) contrasted "Hispanic storytelling [as] the mixture of genres with strong attention to personal detail," with "the Anglo narrative tradition [which] must keep the narrative moving along" (p. 136). Saddam and Yahya (2015) observed that, for American Indians, storytelling is a most important cultural activity, which serves purposes for rediscovering identity, home, and inner purpose. Storytelling in the form of individual and group lived experience can also be a key tool for generating knowledge, exposing, critiquing, and empowering people in the face of the pervasive presence of racial oppression (Yosso, 2015).

In organizations, storytelling can anchor stakeholders in making shared meaning (Smith & Keyton, 2001). Story is at the heart of Barker and Gower's (2010) swift communication concept, which provides partial inspiration for the swift futuring approach. The authors advanced the Storytelling Model of Organizational Communication, which they grounded in Narrative Paradigm Theory (NPT) (Cragan & Shields, 1998). Writing that, "Stories are memorable, easy to understand, and establish a common ground with others to create credibility" (Barker & Gower, 2010, p. 299), they designed their storytelling model to deliver multiple communication benefits: reduction in uncertainty, improved understanding of and participation in the organizational culture, increased cohesiveness among team members, and higher quality internal and external relationships. These benefits were theorized to result in strategic competitive advantages compared to organizations that took other approaches to communication, or no coherent approach at all. In futuring efforts, stories are more useful than abstract theory because they are more engaging and realistic; they "can generate and grant human life dramas, color, sense of action, direction, and possibilities regarding the future" (Pinto & Medina, 2020, p. 293). Stories can be considered recipes of sorts, providing a way of interpreting a situation and providing a way of thinking about what action to take next (Colville et al., 2011).

Stories can be transmitted in person and digitally (Blyle & Perkins, 1999; Brendel & Chou, 2016), either as authorized public relations narratives (Lane, 2023) that are carefully woven and reinforced throughout an organization in memos, meetings and media, or manifesting unpredictably through informal watercooler channels called grapevines (Crampton et al., 1998; Herrick, 1999; Mishra, 1990). Stories spread through grapevines rapidly and in every direction. Mishra (1990) equated grapevine communication to gossip and rumors that "starts early in the morning in the car pools… with one final activity peak at a local bar" (p. 214). In today's social media age, the grapevine operates continuously without the confines of time or space. If the power of grapevine stories is underestimated or ignored, unchecked negative stories can also be the downfall of best laid plans.

It is now possible to more closely examine how storytelling plays out in Figure 1. The formal and informal origin and future stories depicted in the far left side of the model can be thought of as antenarratives. Antenarratives have been described as fragmented, non-linear, mediating, incoherent, collective, unplowed, pre-narrative and speculation (Boje et al., 2016; Weick, 2012). This story mix makes for a cacophony of tales, including myth and lore, originating from myriad sources in and outside the organization. And, while this collection of stories can provide useful gateways for exploring assumptions, mindsets, and behaviors (Brendel & Chou, 2016), they are in terminal competition. Without intervention, none can emerge as a single, visionary guiding light for stakeholders. Any eligible candidates are simply drowned out. Left to its own devices, this mix breeds stagnancy at best and confusion and discord at worst.

Moving from this veritable "state of nature" to a purpose-driven state, where a singular story emerges to guide the organization, is the function of the *visionary prototype scenario* phase represented by the middle box in Figure 1. Scenarios are the default deliverables of futuring (Clardy, 2022). Humans have an extraordinary ability to foresee the future through scenarios (Schwartz, 1996). A well-crafted scenario "grabs us by the collar and says, 'Take a good look at this future. This could be your future. Are you going to be ready?'" (Bishop et al., 2007, p. 5).

In swift futuring, the visionary prototype scenario is another form of story, albeit more highly refined, and combines several approaches to scenario development (e.g., Bezold, 2009; Clardy, 2022; Fergnani, 2019; Kelly &

Zak, 1999; Pinto & Medina, 2020; Schwartz, 1996). The scenario is *visionary* because it is about the organization's preferred future or aspirational vision that stakeholders want to reach (Bezold, 2009), and it is a sort of *prototype* because its form and function is similar to a prototype of a physical product. A physical prototype has been discussed as a *story* of a product that inventors simulate before building (Pinto & Medina, 2020). This idea of scenario as a form of story resonates with Clardy's (2022) definition of a scenario as a "story about the emergence and characteristics of a possible future state" (p. 5).

This point is key: Framing the visionary prototype scenario *as a story* is not optional; it is precisely what enables this futuring approach to be swift. Scenario-as-story taps into the core human activity of storytelling, and it harnesses the power of that activity to generate a vivid, inspiring, easily transmissible vision for the future. Fergnani (2020) has pointed out that the more challenging part of scenarios is not scenario development but scenario dissemination. A story-based scenario all but eliminates the dissemination problem because compelling stories are hard to ignore let alone erase. To the extent a compelling story becomes a collective story, a story in which people see themselves as the heroes, stopping becomes virtually impossible.

How is the visionary prototype scenario (story) developed? Figure 1 theorizes an iterative process which, although specifics will vary by institutional context, will evidence four commonalities across the board: broad participation, visionary leadership, a combination of forecasting and backcasting, and liveliness.

1. *Broad participation*

The scenario must emerge from, and reinforce *organizational alignment* through broad participation. To the extent scenario development is broadly participatory, it will have greater buy-in and a built-in safeguard against competing visions or, perhaps more importantly, against an undermining grapevine. The goal is scenario ownership (Freeth & Drimie, 2016).

2. *Visionary leadership*

Visionary leadership is indispensable for maximum organizational alignment through participation. During swift futuring, leaders use storytelling as one way to achieve and sustain alignment by helping to shape swirling antenarratives and facilitate the emergence of more concrete scenarios. Kelly and Zak (1999) explain that "…leaders are constantly framing information" (p. 314). Leaders look continuously "at the world so as to understand the story that is emerging… [and] the possibility of creating a new narrative that can successfully guide the organization into the future" (Lane, 2023, p. 8). Stories serve as a primary set of information that leaders must frame.

3. *Forecasting and backcasting*

As participation and leadership take hold, organizational stakeholders should answer two questions: What do we want to become? What do we want to want? (Harari, 2015). These questions are best answered through a combination of forecasting and backcasting. Hines et al. (2019) provide the following general definitions for forecasting and backcasting: "Forecasting extrapolates from the present into the future, while backcasting starts from the future and works backward to the present" (p. 2). Of the two, backcasting is most essential, but a form of forecasting still plays a role.

The forecasting part requires a close examination of antenarratives to see what might carry forward to the preferred future. The visionary prototype scenario is to some extent the result of, or at least influenced by, the present and past (Dator, 2009; Lane, 2023). Similar to the Buddhist concept of interdependent arising (Nhat Hanh, 1992), a thing (scenario) arises out of other things (antenarratives). *This* is because *that* is. The final scenario will be, at once, its own story and the interbeing of all stories that preceded it. To the extent that stories are expressions and embodiments of individual and collective identities, which are continuously coming together in a process of organizational becoming, the scenario also represents a living collective soul that bears historical markers. During scenario development, stakeholders identify and pull in themes from the stock of antenarratives that seem to—no matter how faintly—address Harari's (2015) questions. Even apparently highly negative antenarratives often contain a kernel of truth or positivity that can be constructively repurposed in the visionary prototype scenario.

The backcasting part emphasizes action over reflection, which is vital else the organization becomes entrenched in history. "Action clarifies situations" (Colville et al., 2011, p. 7), and the fact that backcasting immediately focuses

attention on the end-point serves to inspire movement. Most importantly, swift futuring theorizes that the future setting is an appealing one—i.e., one of positive transformation, rather than alternatives such as collapse or discipline (Dator, 2009).

4. *Liveliness*

The visionary prototype scenario must be lively. Stakeholder engagement during scenario development can help infuse liveliness. Swift futuring is agnostic to specific exercises to promote engagement (e.g., Dator, 2009; Fergnani, 2009), so any number of methods can be incorporated. The only essential requirement is that it happens.

Confounding factors

Swift futuring recognizes that no future is guaranteed. The right visionary prototype scenario, which simulates the preferred future, is a necessary but insufficient condition for reaching it. The organization must persist through *confounding factors* that might threaten forward progress toward the shared goal. Figure 1 names examples. Collective negative self-beliefs can block progress if stakeholders begin to doubt their own efficacy. Grapevines can disrupt shared positive stories with rumors and gossip. Behaviors can contradict espoused values. Leadership and other changes can affect continuity. How stakeholders respond to external pressures to be or do something different can lead to mission creep at best or internal confusion at worst. And futures fallacies, which Milojević (2021) identifies as 10 detrimental thinking patterns, can conspire to disrupt best laid plans. All the while, time poses a continuous threat as the institution is constantly in a process of becoming. The interaction of these factors means the preferred future is not guaranteed.

Nonetheless, swift futuring fortifies and buttresses efforts so that an organization is able to make haste toward its aspirational vision. How exactly? By daily breathing new life into the visionary prototype scenario. It becomes the thread for weaving the fabric of the new organizational culture. Stakeholders wear this culture like a garment, taking ownership and living it genuinely. Some long timers might find the vision unpalatable and depart as a result, but they are replaced by newcomers who were attracted just because of the same vision. The organization is remade quickly due to this shift in commitment, and the preferred future is attained.

About Minority Serving Institutions

MSIs are found worldwide (Hallmark & Gasman, 2018). In the United States, the federal government has identified several types of MSIs: HSIs, AANAPISIs, PBIs, HBCUs, and TCUs. Each MSI designation carries potential benefits for the institution, most notably eligibility for federal and private grants. But, for reasons we will see, these benefits do not necessarily convey to students, and they open a prime opportunity for swift futuring.

It can be helpful to think of the federal MSI designation in two categories: permanent and non-permanent. Non-permanent MSIs must submit a federal application for recognition after meeting certain criteria, and the MSI designation can be gained, lost, and re-gained over time depending on whether the institution continues meeting those criteria. There is also a group of institutions that scholars (e.g., Nehls et al., 2022) refer to as "emerging" MSIs, which includes institutions that are on the cusp of meeting the minimum requirements but have not yet crossed the threshold. Many emerging MSIs also exemplify the sort of existential identity challenges and time-bound urgency that makes a swift futuring approach so important. An additional important unknown is how the June 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision against race-conscious college admissions might affect both MSIs and emerging MSIs.

Examples of MSIs in the non-permanent category include HSIs, AANAPISIs, PBIs. One primary factor determining an institution's membership in this group is the percentage of undergraduate students it enrolls from the target racial/ethnic demographic (e.g., HSIs = 25%; PBIs = 50%; AANAPISIs = 10%). Operating alongside this non-permanent category of MSIs is another group (HBCUs and TCUs) that enjoys more stable recognition. This group has no application requirements tied to changing criteria such as undergraduate enrollments. TCUs receive their designation based on the core criterion of being associated with a tribe. HBCUs must have been formed prior to 1964. No new HBCUs will be created, although existing HBCUs can be lost through attrition. Nearly all HBCUs serve a majority Black American student population, but it is possible for an institution to be an HBCU and serve a majority white demographic. Bluefield State College in West Virginia is a prominent example. And, although rare,

an institution can also hold a permanent HBCU status and a non-permanent MSIs designation simultaneously. St. Philip's College in Texas is both an HBCU and HSI.

The academic literature on MSIs has grown over recent years to include many themes typical to higher education research but with a special orientation to the MSI context. Examples include history (Gasman et al., 2015), faculty (Blake, 2018; Hubbard & Stage, 2009), leadership (Palmer et al., 2017), philanthropic activity (Gasman & Drezner, 2008; Gasman et al., 2022), student services (Arroyo et al., 2020; Palmer et al., 2022), student success (Cunningham et al., 2014), strategic planning (Flores & Leal, 2023), and inter-institutional partnerships (Ofili et al., 2013), among many others. The MSI literature also includes topics that are specific to this category, such as organizational identity both at established MSIs and emerging MSIs (Cuellar, 2019; Garcia & Dwyer, 2018; Velez et al., 2023).

MSIs as use case for swift futuring

Given the differences across MSIs that are apparent above, one can legitimately ask why it is instructive to treat them as a group for any reason, including as a use case for swift futuring. Scholars (e.g., Palmer et al., 2017) rightly emphasize the within-group heterogeneity of these institutions. Affirming MSIs' heterogeneity is important for the same reason that affirming racial diversity is important. It counters popular and harmful stereotypes, and it acknowledges the simple fact that individuals are not carbon copies of each other.

In the context of MSIs' diversity, the fact remains that a certain minimum set of similarities and expectations come with the awarding of MSI status. And, the fact also remains that all federal MSI designations, even the more permanent HBCU and TCU labels, leave open the possibility that a college or university can hold an MSI status without behaving as an MSI in the present let alone the future. It is possible to be labeled an MSI without reaching the aspirational MSI vision.

That point makes MSIs a valuable use case for swift futuring. There is no federal requirement for any MSI to demonstrate or validate that it is focused on *serving* its namesake student demographic by ensuring positive outcomes for those students (Garcia et al., 2019; Hubbard & Stage, 2009). Although evidence suggests that MSIs on the whole do contribute to the success and wellbeing of historically marginalized populations (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014; Conrad & Gasman, 2017; Rodríguez & Calderón Galdeano, 2015), the lack of accountability to demonstrate outcomes through formal reporting means a college or university can be an MSI without centering its MSI identity in its past, present, or future storyline. In plain terms, the consequences of how an MSI's stakeholders choose to identify or de-identify with their MSI status can have profound implications on present-day culture and future planning, including how MSI grant monies are expended and whether students feel a sense of belonging on the campuses that purport to serve them the most.

HSIs illustrate these acute identity challenges. HSIs educate approximately two-thirds of Hispanic students in the United States (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2023). Because the HSI designation dates back only to 1992 (the AANAPISI designation is even more recent and dates to 2008), the HSI phenomenon typically involves a historically white institution (HWI) transitioning to HSI status. This background leads to differing antenarratives about the institution depending on who is being asked (Moreman, 2019; Velez et al., 2023), and the potential for an intra-institutional cognitive dissonance that complicates and confounds futuring efforts. Davis (2022) accurately observes, "Non-inclusive histories lead to non-inclusive futures" (p. 1). Because the HSI designation requires only 25% Hispanic undergraduate enrollment, it is possible for an institution to become an MSI while enrolling a minority of students from the target population by percentage of total undergraduate enrollment. Whether the HSI makes the intentional decision to invest in serving its Hispanic students, or whether it effectively sweeps the HSI identity under the rug while continuing to behave like any other HWI, is a matter of choice (Velez et al., 2023).

The extent to which a designated HSI chooses to behave like an HSI can be measured in a concept called *servingness*. This concept is relevant to all MSIs as a shared feature of an MSI preferred future, which would be detailed in visionary prototype scenarios. Servingness is the degree to which an institution holistically supports its Hispanic students, and it can be elusive and difficult to attain and measure (Garcia et al., 2019). In an effort to aid in the study of HSIs and to guide their development toward greater levels of servingness, Garcia (2017) and Garcia and colleagues (2019) proposed an organizational typology of HSI identities and a multidimensional framework of servingness in HSIs respectively. The typology (Garcia, 2017) describes four levels of HSIs:

1. Latinx-enrolling: The institution enrolls a minimum of 25% Latinx students, but it does not produce equitable outcomes or have a supportive culture for Latinx students.
2. Latinx-producing: The institution lacks a supportive culture for Latinx students, but it does produce equitable outcomes for them.
3. Latinx-enhancing: The institution has a supportive culture for Latinx students, but it does not necessarily produce equitable outcomes for them as typically measured.
4. Latinx-serving: The institution has a supportive culture for Latinx students, and it produces equitable outcomes for them.

Building on this typology, the multidimensional framework of servingness in HSIs (Garcia et al., 2019) expands and complicates what it means to be Hispanic-serving by identifying dozens of internal and external factors and outcomes associated with the notion of servingness. One is indicators of serving, which "include outcomes and experiences of both students and nonstudents" ranging from racial identity and cultural validation on campus to course completion, GPA, and labor market outcomes (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 771). The other is structures for serving, which include "the decisions that leaders make with regard to serving, including developing mission and values for serving; [and] implementing strategic and diversity plans for serving" (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 772). On the theme of strategic planning, Flores and Leal (2023) analyzed the contents of 19 strategic plans at Texas HSIs. The researchers identified three types of HSIs from a strategic planning perspective: Latinx-ghosting, Latinx-leaning, and Latinx-serving. These categories align well with Garcia (2017), and again place into bold relief the fact that an HSI—or any MSI for that matter—can obtain and wear the "minority serving" badge either superficially or intentionally, and how it wears the badge affects how it thinks about and moves into the future.

The case of swift futuring at MSIs should be becoming clearer now. The model is relevant for MSIs as a group for at least six reasons:

One, MSIs face diverse and competing formal and informal stories about their origins and futures. These collective antenarratives often veer negative and cast a shadow over the will of individual MSIs to align for positive scenario development. Swift futuring acknowledges the power of negative antenarratives and the need to reshape and get beyond them through a more intentional approach to storytelling via visionary prototype scenario development.

Two, speaking of stories, the target populations of many MSIs—Black, Latinx, Southeast Asian, Islander, Native American—tend to come from oral traditions (Rebolledo, 1990; Saddam & Yahya, 2015; Thomas 2021). By centering the future-as-story, swift futuring fits naturally with a preexisting cultural practice.

Three, non-permanent MSIs face a time-bound application and renewal calendar. This reason most frequently impacts HSIs and AANAPISIs, which can teeter on the edge of the minimum required undergraduate enrollment for years, and which can hold the designation one year only to lose it the next. Time is not a luxury for these MSIs, or for emerging MSIs that are hoping to make the transition in any given year. A swift futuring approach can help such institutions get unstuck from the predicament of being unprepared and delayed by calendar years.

Four, like all postsecondary institutions, the flow of students through the institutional pipeline is constant. Unlike all postsecondary institutions, MSIs implicitly promise a higher level of servingness that they must deliver on. Receiving the MSI designation alone is only one step in the larger project of cultivating and delivering on the full promise of an MSI identity. Waiting too long to engage in targeted futuring and reaching the pinnacle of servingness could mean that an MSI fails to deliver maximal benefits to hundreds or thousands of students while the institution sorts out its identity.

Five, MSIs need to move beyond the public perception of instability *post haste*. HBCUs exemplify perceived instability. Searching keywords "future" and "HBCU" in Google produces unfavorable results suggesting the future of these institutions is uncertain. HBCUs are already known colloquially as the institutions that do more with less, which is not necessarily a positive distinction in a sea of postsecondary choice. Quickly moving beyond the albatross of being a synonym for uncertainty is in the best interest of HBCUs, which like all institutions depend on a positive public image to instill confidence that they are viable institutions of choice for new generations of savvy students and families. This point holds true for many other MSIs. Swift futuring is justified on this basis to better shape the narrative as MSIs seek to tell their own story and gain a better position relative to their competitors.

Six, simply by being designated as minority serving, MSIs will face many additional confounding factors on the way to their preferred futures. To the extent an MSI harnesses the power of storytelling in a formal vision-based scenario, it builds in a rally cry to better insulate itself against stiff headwinds and corrosive challenges.

In sum, these factors provide reasons for MSIs as a use case for swift futuring. Swift futuring can aid MSI leaders and other stakeholders to craft their collective identities and to plan for—and reach—their preferred futures as institutions defined by *servingness*.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

As a new model that builds on established principles, it is hoped that swift futuring offers promising directions for practice and research.

For practice

Turning to recommendations for practice, it is first important to emphasize the flexibility of the swift futuring approach. It can be overlayed to complement other frameworks that focus on collective storytelling, organizational change, and/or futuring. For example, practitioners can explore integration with Barker and Gower's (2010) Storytelling Model of Organizational Communication, Brendel and Chou's (2016) Collaborative Digital Storytelling approach, or Fergnani's (2020) future persona method, among many others.

Crucially, no one-size-fits-all application of swift futuring will work in every context. Factors on the ground affect implementation. Examples include organizational size; current culture and climate; visionary leadership; trust for leadership; psychological safety; extent to which members share a sense that change is needed on a short time horizon; quantity and quality of positive antenarratives compared to negative antenarratives; and existing stock of collective tradition(s) and sense of shared destiny all play a role in how swift futuring is best applied.

A recommendation can also be made about the relationship between swift futuring and traditional strategic planning. The two activities can be overlayed so that one strengthens the other. Strategic planning, which typically results in themes, goals, tactics, and metrics, can result in a final product that stakeholders have trouble remembering. Tying the strategic plan to a larger story—the visionary prototype scenario for the preferred future—can help fortify it in the collective soul. Bezold (2009) has pointed out that futuring can enable stakeholders to "recognized opportunities and threats that are invisible to traditional planning" (p. 86). Similarly, swift futuring, like other futuring approaches, can easily veer into abstraction and can benefit from the concrete signposts and other markers that a good strategic plan provides (Sangchai, 1975).

Finally, the right external facilitator can add value to a swift futuring effort. An objective third party serving as a guide can free organizational stakeholders to give themselves fully to the creative process, and provide guardrails to stay on task (Lane, 2023). It is essential that the facilitator has a deep theoretical and practical understanding of futuring, an ability to listen to stakeholders and synthesize ideas into prototype scenario (story) form, and a commitment to centering the stakeholders' most dearly held values, traditions, and aspirations over their own. That commitment is necessary in all cases, but especially when historically minoritized populations are involved (Davis, 2022) as in the case of MSIs, for example.

For research

Swift futuring also offers promising directions for research, of which I list five here. One is to investigate diverse participatory applications of swift futuring as part of a larger project to diversify futuring overall (e.g., Davis, 2022). This investigation could examine how different populations use the storytelling feature of swift futuring in combination with their own narrative traditions.

The second recommendation is to use research to develop a prototypical MSI story that can be employed as a pattern for other MSIs. The study would identify a population of MSIs that have relatively highly developed organizational stories. An example is Paul Quinn College, a private HBCU located in Dallas, Texas. The researcher would conduct a content analysis of these stories with the goal of identifying similar rhetorical elements of a prototypical MSI story. Those elements could be converted to themes or other storytelling devices, and then used in

swift futuring efforts at other MSIs to help them build their own stories for a preferred future. A cautionary caveat to this approach would be the within-group diversity of MSIs, so a prototypical MSI story must acknowledge the nuanced ways individual MSIs will apply it in real life.

The third recommendation is to look at how certain established research methodologies might inform the theory and practice of swift futuring. Two candidate methodologies are qualitative: grounded theory and narrative inquiry. Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) might use the visionary prototype scenario, together with other artifacts left over from the swift futuring process, to develop a theory of collective change. Narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) might study the personal experiences of organizational stakeholders after they went through the swift futuring process. Documenting personal experiences in autoethnographic fashion can make a contribution to both research and practice by revealing aspects of the approach that might be either more advantageous or challenging than others. Narrative inquiry can also reveal new and hidden antenarratives which, if they have a negative bent vis-à-vis the organization's stated visionary prototype scenario, might provide early evidence that the long-term stability of the organization's preferred future is questionable. As Boje (2011a) writes, "But people *live* in the antenarrative" (emphasis added).

The fourth recommendation is to explore connections between the antenarrative concept and the fourth aspect of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), or metaphor/myth. Milojević and Inayatullah (2015) note that one reason a new strategy might fail is underlying narratives, or metaphors/myths, that have not been adequately resolved. These are the "elephant in the room," which not unlike antenarratives, can create a powerful invisible force that blocks forward progress. Future research to explore CLA broadly, and the metaphor/myth aspect specifically, in light of swift futuring is needed.

A final recommendation is to juxtapose swift futuring with existing futuring frameworks. Since futurists tend to use longer time horizons, might there be value in incorporating swift futuring either to jumpstart progress or to define and reach an early milestone? In the situation of organizations that fit the profile of an MSI, especially in light of shifting socio-political dynamics, the value might be timely.

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