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DISCOURSES OF DIVERSITY:  
NEGOTIATING THE BOUNDARIES FOR  
EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND IDENTITY  
THROUGH THE DISCOURSE OF SOCIALLY  
SITUATED SUBJECTS

Hannah Oliha

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SITUATED SUBJECTS**

By

Hannah Oliha

B.A., St. Olaf College, 2002  
M.A., Hamline University, 2005

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Communication**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2010

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Dedication

To my parents, thank you for believing in me.

I love you.

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Most of all, I acknowledge the divine creator and sustainer. Thank you God for enabling me to start and finish what I couldn't accomplish on my own.

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B.A., Interdisciplinary, St. Olaf College, 2002

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**ABSTRACT**

The demographic changes in the U.S. and the contestation of taken-for-granted social dynamics are breeding fragmentation and discursive struggles over individual, group, institutional and national identities. Questions of who fits into the category of “American,” who should be included in U.S. institutions, and the boundaries for their inclusion have taken center stage in this 21<sup>st</sup> century moment. Unsurprisingly, the word “diversity” has taken on epic proportions and is now the channel for engaging in these conversations centered on issues of equity, inclusion and difference. This dissertation explores the multiple ways diversity is viewed in one U.S. institution, higher education, to understand how different views of diversity are grounded in the standpoints of different socially embedded actors, while also affecting institutional practice and the larger social order.

The data for this dissertation emerged through interviews with administrators, faculty and students at the University of New Mexico and the University of Minnesota. Grounded in standpoint theory and critical discourse analysis, this dissertation explores multiple discourses of diversity, the social practices they reflect, and the ideological assumptions they encourage. These ideological assumptions implicate issues of agency.

Five diversity discourses emerged, representing different subject positions: (1) *extreme pluralism*; (2) *thinking through practical and institutional constraints*; (3) *diversity “work” offers socio-political currency*; (4) *diversity is embodied and has material consequences*; and (5) *diversity requires collective advocacy for change*. Interviewees also discussed social practices regarding diversity by critiquing practices that reinforce ongoing inequities, those that reify the status quo, and finally, practices that encourage assimilation. Additionally, interviewees called for practices that recognize intersecting identities and oppressions. The interviews also demonstrate how dominant diversity discourses may engender individual and “goodwill” meritocracy, the notion that the marginalized must be the primary change agents of oppressive social structures and the idea that racial and ethnic minorities must “play the game” to be successful in U.S. institutions.

This dissertation makes the following contribution: it elucidates how diversity is understood and operationalized differently by social actors. Therefore, to fully realize the promise of a democratic and diverse society, different views of diversity must be understood to comprehend their impact on individual and group agency, and institutional and social practices. Finally the data suggest that views of diversity must be analyzed critically to understand how they may be challenging and/or reifying problematic social structures driven by a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision. As institutions continue to face challenges related to the inclusion of historically underrepresented voices in the context of a diverse society espousing the ideals of equity and justice, this study posits that there will be a greater need to understand the multiple discourses of diversity that exist and how those discourses affect institutional practice and the success of differently positioned groups and subjects.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Over the years, diversity has been defined in terms of categorical representations of historically marginalized persons (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). Yet it is becoming evident that the idea and the reality of a diverse society are nuanced and involve complicated processes around difference, group relations and social hierarchies; in fact, scholars now assert that diversity is indeed more than representative numbers of a variety of demographic groups. Caught betwixt and between complex social processes that are shaped by history, legal mandates to level the playing field, and social justice imperatives to foster inclusion and equity, U.S. institutions are faced with the challenge of defining *who they are* on the way to becoming *who they must be* in light of the demographic changes in the U.S. In fact, it is the ongoing social processes and demographic changes that have created a need for institutions to, “Harness the power of diversity.” Yet while institutions have been attempting to do this over the course of the last two decades with various levels of success, it is becoming evident that the notion of diversity is not only concerned with issues of difference, but it is also at the heart of an intense “contest over what defines us as a nation” (Macedo, as cited in Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005, p. 3). Implicated in this process of defining national identity are the identity politics of U.S. institutions and questions centered on *who* should be included, *how* and *why*. It is these ideas that complicate the definition of the word diversity, and center its conceptualization at the intersections of individual standpoints and historical, political and economic discourses.

Thus this dissertation makes the claim that the fierce contestation over what diversity is and what it does is symptomatic of the stakes involved in defining U.S. identity, who should be involved in U.S. institutions and the general boundaries for inclusion and equity in the North American social context. I posit that these boundaries have shifted and even evolved as North America has grappled with the historical legacy of race relations and the conditions that they have created. These processes have led to constant negotiation and the mobilization of social justice terms centered on the equity

and inclusion of the historically marginalized in U.S. society. I argue that the term diversity is a contemporary conduit of these social justice ideals geared towards challenging the machinations of privilege in the service of racial hierarchies that reinscribe Eurocentric standards while bracketing the success of historically marginalized racial and ethnic minorities in U.S. society. As a symbol of social justice efforts to include these groups, it is being mobilized widely by institutions in contemporary North America and most notably, in U.S. higher education.

#### Rationale for Studying Conceptualizations of Diversity in U.S. Higher Education

In 2003 the University of Michigan went before the Supreme Court in response to allegations of reverse discrimination over the use of diversity as a criterion in student admissions. Through the two cases brought before the Supreme Court, the University of Michigan had to provide a compelling argument for the value of diversity in the education process (Gurin, Dey, Gurin & Hurtado, 2003). The University of Michigan was able to do this, but the situation propelled a movement to articulate the contemporary status of diversity in academe and its overall utility (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). One specific initiative that emerged within this movement is the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) project: Inclusive Excellence. In this project, the AACU commissioned a number of scholars to write three papers related to diversity, its current state in the academy, and how it can be institutionalized as a compelling *institutional process*. This effort emerged given a number of key issues:

- a) For many years institutions have been operationalizing diversity at various levels creating multiple, and often disconnected pockets of effectiveness, and in some instances, inefficiency.
- b) Diversity and excellence are often separate concepts in many institutions such that when diversity is operationalized, it is merely programmatic. For instance, in some institutions, numerical diversity is operationalized, leading to programs that increase access to students of

color. Yet the AACU asserts that this type of diversity is often not connected to diminishing the achievement gap between students of color and White students, or even to fostering the retention of students of color. These issues are invariably connected to excellence because they propose questions related to who can and who should succeed in the academy and the role of institutions in fostering the success of all students (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005).

This status of diversity and diversity related issues in the academy is tied to the AACU's project for inclusive excellence. Specifically, there is significant fragmentation in educational institutions about what diversity is, what it does and how it relates to departments and day-to-day functioning (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, & Bartee, 2005).

Despite this fragmentation in the treatment of diversity issues, education scholars predict that students in the academy will become more diverse and colleges and universities will have to respond. In spite of this compelling need to respond, Hon, Wiegold and Chance (1999) assert that most administrators are still unsure about whether diversity is an educational tool or a necessary evil. Therefore, to make diversity a compelling institutional interest as the AACU proposes, a deeper understanding of what diversity means to key players is critical. While the AACU may have a transformative definition of diversity and how it can foster educational excellence, this definition is also competing with alternate discourses of diversity.

At the heart of my rationale for studying conceptualizations of diversity is its unstable nature in institutional and national life. Initially this instability was attributed to the newness of the field in the late 1990s (Duncan, 1997). Yet in the contemporary United States, where it is apparent that talk of diversity is not going away, it is still a challenging idea to nail down ideationally. In fact even in the late 1990s scholars were already saying "Personal definitions and expectations of diversity... often differ... [thus] it is important to achieve common ground through shared meaning and

vocabulary” (Duncan, 1997, p. 33). Invariably, as the University of Michigan case in 2003 proved, finding common ground in definitions of diversity is still an imperative.

The demographic changes in the U.S. have made diversity a critical project for many institutions. However, it is important to consider the multiple definitions of diversity that may exist within an institution, department and even team. In fact it is this diversity of orientations *within* diversity discourses that has created a ruptured, fragmented discursive field of diversity. Thomas (1997) asserts that when diversity is poorly understood, defined, and operationalized, institutions engage in multiple “diversity cycles” (p. 46). He suggests that:

These cycles begin when an organization increases the demographic diversity of its workforce without adapting its culture, climate or systems to accommodate this diversity.

The ensuing turmoil triggers a backlash that leads to calls to minimize diversity, which leads, in turn, to a narrowing of representation and subsequent pressure for broader inclusion, causing the cycle to begin again. (Thomas, 1997, p. 46)

This negative cycle is merely one example of institutional and personal conceptualizations of diversity clashing and causing ruptures. The cries of reverse discrimination in recent years by Whites are another instance of the ruptures. Thus to fully realize the power of a society grounded on the inclusion of multiple cultures and perspectives, it is crucial to understand the symbolic use of the word diversity in U.S. institutions.

#### Statement of the Problem

As socio-cultural shifts produced by demographic changes in the U.S. continue to pose issues of equity, inclusion, and ensuring full rights of citizenship for all persons, I argue that the interrogation of the multiplicity of meanings embedded in one word that is currently at the center of these efforts could shed light on the operation of difference in this new historical moment. As geopolitics on the world’s stage continue to reinscribe and challenge first and third world

formations, issues of power and privilege, margins and centers, and the dialectical tensions between historical and contemporary social issues, this study opens the door for interrogating the evolution and transformation of the politics of difference in the U.S. context.

More specifically, I argue that the term “diversity” is embedded with layers of meaning that sometimes function in opposition. These oppositions often mobilize conflicting discourses and foster multiple conceptualizations of the *reality* and *practicality* of diversity. Despite the accumulation of research in the area, however, there is a dearth of scholarship exploring these multiply occurring definitions and discourses and their effect on institutional efforts centered on equity and inclusion. Presently some institutions enter into conversations around diversity assuming that a unified definition of diversity is being invoked. Yet given the power of positionality in bracketing understandings of social phenomena (Hartsock, 1998), it is evident that diversity is defined through intersections of gender, race, culture and political positioning, among other categories of difference, and therefore, its meanings differ among individuals. Consequently, change efforts to develop policy and encourage equity and inclusion face significant backlash when institutional definitions of diversity collide with individual understandings. In this respect, more needs to be known about the role of individual understandings of diversity in the ongoing efforts to foster equity and inclusion in U.S. institutions. Specifically, I argue that diversity is conceptualized differently by multiple social actors whose subject positions speak to dissimilar levels of privilege, power and agency. These various subject positions: (1) enable the emergence of multiple conceptualizations of diversity; (2) speak to the history and social practices of multicultural North America; (3) illuminate the ideologies embedded in different conceptualizations of diversity; and (4) affect levels of privilege and agency, while impacting the distribution of positional status.

In short, this dissertation shows how discourses of diversity are contextually based in the multiple subject positions social actors inhabit, and how they have social implications for who

should be involved in institutions and how they are involved. All of these issues speak to the social justice ideals of equity and inclusion that U.S. Americans have been debating for decades in the ongoing efforts to create a democratic and inclusive society. Such a study is vitally important as the nations institutions respond to demands to “level the playing field” from racial and ethnic minorities that were historically denied full rights of citizenship and who continue to face systemic marginalization. To understand the multiple conceptualizations of diversity in one institutional space is to understand the workings of issues of equity and inclusion in this moment in North America’s history. Finally, I posit that to practice the ideals of equity and inclusion, leaders in U.S. institutions must understand the multiple ways diversity is conceptualized, the consequences of these perspectives on institutional change efforts, and how their implementation may relate to the success of historically marginalized individuals within those institutions. One window to build an understanding is to address the ideologies mobilized by different views of diversity.

I accomplish this by looking at one U.S. institution, higher education. The data for this dissertation come from interviews with administrators, faculty and students at the University of New Mexico and the University of Minnesota. This combination of research sites and subjects fosters an understanding of multiple conceptualizations of diversity. The range of positions enacted by interviewees enables me to explore diverse views of organizational change efforts and their ideological implications for the mobilization of discourses, levels of agency and group status positioning. Given the importance of subject positions and the production of discourse for this study, the research is grounded in Hartsock’s (1998) standpoint theory and the methodological procedures of critical discourse analysis. In the next section, I present the elements of standpoint theory that make it a crucial theoretical lens for this study.

#### Theoretical Framework: Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory upholds the notion that people's perceptions of the world are grounded in their position in society. This theory is rooted in the work of feminist theorists. Its foundations originate with the work of German philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who wrote about the importance of social positions in interpreting the world. Using the example of a master and a slave, he suggested that though both "may occupy the same chronological and geographical position and may live in a common society, the radically different social positions of the master and the slave lead to very different views of the world" (Miller, 2005, 304). Later, Marx suggested that under capitalism, the antagonistic positions of the wealthy and the working class determine their views of the world and of each other. At the heart of standpoint theory, then, is the proposition that "an individual's position in society has important consequences for what can be perceived, known, and understood" (Miller, 2005, p. 304). This important supposition reinforces the idea that reality is socially constructed. This is consistent with the assumption that economic standing not only produces status positioning, but also works cyclically to shape worldviews and create subject positions that reinforce material conditions.

Hartsock (1998), a pioneer of standpoint theory in feminist studies, provided five points that serve as the basic tenets of this theory:

- An individual's life experiences will determine her/his understanding of and interaction with the world.
- Because society is hierarchical, it fosters a situation in which there are dominant and subordinate groups, and the experience of both groups will be opposite. Hence, those in power will perceive from the standpoint of their privileged position alone, yet subordinate groups will not only understand their marginalized position but will also see and understand how power is wielded by the dominant group.

- The dominant group creates and perpetuates the rules, again creating and maintaining the instrument of their power.
- Subordinate groups cannot merely occupy a social or political position, but they must “struggle” to understand the implications of this position.
- Standpoint theory exposes the injustice and inhumanity of hegemony and provides possibilities for revision and even liberation.

At its core, standpoint theory captures the experiences of those living on the margins. Standpoint theory also “points to the ways the ruling group’s vision may be both perverse and made real by means of that group’s power to define the terms for the community as a whole” further explaining the dominance of some discourses of diversity over others (Hartsock, 1983, p. 288). While this concept was initially developed by feminist scholars, it has been applied by scholars in the study of marginalized groups such as racial and ethnic minorities among others. Orbe (1998), for example, developed co-cultural theory using standpoint theory as part of his theoretical base. Co-cultural theory predicts that marginalized persons will employ communication practices that are congruent with their subject positions in different social spaces. Collier (2002) affirms this point through her studies of intercultural communication, wherein she claims that all groups do not inhabit the same spatial fields of power; they often occupy different positions that impact their perceptions of the world and their communication practices.

Thus, this theory suggests that individuals inhabit different spaces in the social strata and, therefore, understand reality differently. What we can know, what we feel about what we know, and how we act in general are reflections of our positions. Another crucial part of this theory is the notion that marginalized groups can understand their positionality and that of the dominant groups because they must understand both to survive. Dominant groups, on the other hand, only understand their positionality because there is no impetus to understand the position of the

marginalized. This theoretical lens provides a useful framework to understand discourses of diversity, the contestation and reification of broader political and educational discourses, and the politics of status and agency that may be enacted through them.

This theory informed the research design and data analysis. Given its strong emphasis on positionality, hierarchy and social dynamics, standpoint theory is a relevant theoretical foundation that allowed me to interrogate the symbiotic relationship between diversity discourses and subject positions. It allowed me to consider the social practices that different subjects reference in relation to diversity. Finally, I was able to explore how agency may be enabled and constrained by the ideological implications of diversity discourses.

### Research Questions

Following are the research questions guiding this study.

RQ 1: What conceptualizations of diversity emerge in interview discourses?

RQ 2: How are historical and contemporary social practices evident in interview discourses?

RQ 3: What ideologies emerge and what are the implications for individual and institutional agency?

### Conceptual Overview

#### *Discourse and Ideology*

For the purposes of this study, I define discourse as fixing meaning by discursively combining a particular set of ideas, beliefs and symbols. The combination of different sets of ideas, beliefs and symbols regarding the same social phenomenon, through discursive practice, leads to discursive struggle (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Implicated in the creation and reification of different discourses are social practices, ideologies and issues of agency. In fact, the relationship between discourse, social practices, ideologies and agency can be seen through the ideological functions of discourse.

For the purpose of this study, I define ideology as the “taken for granted assumptions about reality that influence perceptions of situations and events” (Deetz & Kersten, 1983, p. 162).

Ideologies establish the boundaries for social practice by determining how meaning can be fixed.

These determinations police and control discourse, even as they establish the boundaries for action as a result. In this sense, ideologies help to shape identities and experiences through assumptions

about groups and ideas about the ideal social relations between groups. These ideas about the social relations between groups reproduce unequal power relations (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Van Dijk

(2006) makes the same assertion through his claim that ideologies are “belief systems... [that] are *socially shared* by the members of a *collectivity* of social actors” (p. 116). He argues that these belief

systems are developed “in relation to other groups.” Importantly, “they are the ultimate basis of the discourses and other social practices of the members of social groups” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 117).

Through these arguments, Van Dijk argues for the link between discourse, social practices, ideology and agency. Relatedly, this study demonstrates how ideologies held by collectivities affect social practices and different levels of agency.

In fact, Fairclough (2003) asserts that discourse is a form of social practice that is used in conjunction with other social processes in the organization of society (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

Therefore, by uncovering discourses of diversity, I explored social practices that have a constitutive effect on the social structure of the two campus communities. I sought to make connections

between discourses of diversity as social practices that: (1) organize institutional practices through their ideological functions; and (2) reflect a broader social order through the circulation of discourse.

Because “language is an irreducible part of social life” as Fairclough (2003) suggests, a critical analysis of discourses of diversity fosters an understanding of how they produce organizational

frameworks and social conditions, and how they operate in perpetuating asymmetrical power

structures and the oppression of the marginalized (p. 2). This illuminates the symbiotic relationship

between discourse, social practices, ideology and agency. Since discourse is produced by differently positioned individuals, with different standpoints as a result, the connection between standpoints, discourse, social practices, ideologies and agency is irrevocable. In this way, discourses are ideological and ideology makes particular types of discourse allowable in the subject's realm of possibility (the boundaries of the subject's discourse and social action). Consequently, struggles over discourse and meaning are considered the effects of different ideologies.

One example of the connection between these key ideas is the claim by some scholars that whiteness is an *ideological discourse* because it fixes the notion of whiteness as a central organizing force in social life; it does this discursively by creating an I-Other dialectic (Jackson, Shin & Wilson, 2000). This dialectic manifests through social hierarchical practices creating a tension between differently positioned racial groups. Whiteness attempts to alleviate that tension by functioning as what Jackson, Shin and Wilson (2000) call an *unmarked* category, an identity marker that is minimized to the point of invisibility by its bearer, yet has grave material consequences. So in this sense, whiteness functions as an example of an ideological discourse, in that it mobilizes taken-for-granted assumptions about the self and the other that shape social practices and frame issues and events. Through this study, I explored the ideological underpinnings of discourses of diversity by illuminating how these discourses mobilize different understandings of the self and the other, shape social practices, implicate ideologies, and subsequently, different levels of agency.

### *Agency*

In the context of this study, I take a dialectical and interactive approach to agency that posits that “individuals do not exist in isolation, but bear the traces of other individuals, institutions, collective social relations, and histories...” (Gunn & Cloud, 2010, p. 72). This view of agency considers how individuals are positioned in relation to history, social structures, and others. It suggests that agency is not something that one has or doesn't have, but rather it can only be

understood in context: subjects have varying degrees of agency to the extent that their positionality, the social structure in which they are embedded, and the history attached to any given interactive moment allow.

In line with Gunn and Cloud (2010), I contend that “agency” is not something that “any one person possess[es];” rather, agency is a phenomenon that is a part of the “interactive dynamic of material and social reality” (p. 72). This approach to agency is reflected in Marx’s (1852/2009) idea that humans can make history, yet “they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past” (para 1). This view of agency demonstrates how histories and social relations can enable and/or constrain agency; an individual cannot merely rise up and change a situation because agency is socially, structurally and, therefore, interactionally bound. Yet Gunn and Cloud (2010) assert that:

This is not to say an individual does not make choices that affect his or her life. Rather, a dialectical way of thinking about agency sees an individual only in relation to other individuals, social relations, and histories. Consequently, the individual will cannot exist independent of interactivity, dialogue, and collectivity. (p. 72)

Agency is situationally defined and wielded. It is not something that one has, nor can it be defined categorically as “this” or “that.” Rather, Gunn and Cloud (2010) assert that “how we contend with agency depends on the particular circumstances and material specificity of a given event” (p. 73).

Thus agency is interactive, contingent, and specific. What is left then is to assess agency on a case by case basis, in the context of specific situations that require delving into the case in question and carefully considering the subjects, histories, and social interactions involved.

#### *Diversity: Race as an Organizing Construct*

This study explores diversity in relation to racialized discourses of margins and centers, while being open to the fact that other discourses of difference such as gender and class are also

articulated in conjunction with discourses of diversity. I assert that while diversity may be defined at the intersections of class and gender, among other categories of difference, it is critical to start with racial difference given its centrality in the socio-cultural imagination and operation of U.S. society and its important role in higher education institutions. In fact I maintain that race is a crucial launch pad for understanding discourses of diversity given the ever increasing discourse of color blindness which attempts to promote “cultural amnesia about the structuring forces of race, racialization and even overt racism within” U.S. institutions, including and most notably “the academy” (Young & Braziel, 2006, p. 1). In fact Young and Braziel assert that race is so central to the U.S.’s socio-structural life that “it has been formative in thought itself, and structurally inherent to the formation of knowledge and academic disciplines,” that invariably represent and even constitute social formations (p. 3). These social formations are endemic to diversity discourse and are the very reason why diversity has become such a buzz word in U.S. institutions. For this reason, I take seriously the call of Omi and Winant (1994) to understand the complex network of social meanings and processes implicated in race and in its centrality in the North American social context—indeed the emergence of diversity as a dominant social and institutional phenomenon is reflective of this crucial point as subsequent chapters suggest.

Omi and Winant (1994) assert that “the effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (p. 55). While color blind rhetors attest that “race is no longer relevant” (Bonilla Silva, 2006, p. 2) and should not be discussed, Omi and Winant (1994) ask the compelling question of how the U.S. can “dispense” with race, and in so doing, “jettison widely held beliefs, beliefs which moreover are central to everyone’s identity and understanding of the social world” (p. 55). Instead of throwing away race, so to speak, Omi and Winant suggest that we recognize “that despite its uncertainties and contradictions, the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in

structuring and representing the social world” (p. 55). Although many U.S. Americans in the current social and political context embrace a color blind rhetoric (Giroux, 2003), race remains a central organizing force in the North American psyche policing matters of difference and diversity.

*Diversity, Higher Education and Whiteness Ideology*

In line with other scholarship on racial ideology, Fine (1997) unearths how privilege is allowed to build and work on behalf of a racial majority such that racial projects have become the norm and whiteness has maintained its hegemony in a multicultural society. In her article, *Witnessing Whiteness*, Fine (1997) asserts that whiteness is produced institutionally and structurally through the “exclusion and the denial of opportunity to people of color” (p. 60). Through her exploration of educational institutions, she unearths how privilege accrues to Whites in the U.S. context. She explores how educational institutions reproduce larger social formations of power, exclusion, and privilege. This is reflected in Cleckley’s (1997) claim that:

Perhaps the known universe is represented on the various campuses, but there is often little or no meaningful interaction between the various racial, cultural and ethnic groups that occupy the same space, sit in the same classrooms and earn the same degree. (p. 5)

I argue that this is the key reason for interrogating the discourses of diversity in higher education—because of its ability to create and maintain racial formations that *constitute* and *represent* larger social formations. Young and Braziel (2006) echo this argument:

The institutionalized foundations of race and racialized ways of knowing and the resolute cultural amnesia within the academy, even from within the most unexpected halls of that institution, have perpetuated, not solved, resolved or even tepidly confronted this centuries-old problem. (p. 1)

Thus academic spaces often become sites of struggle about culture, diversity, power and difference.

This supposition is in line with recent scholarship that asserts that higher education is a vital space for unmasking the machinations of power and racial hierarchy that are central to larger social structures for example. When one considers the under-representation of faculty of color in higher education, their alienation in some instances (Torres, 2006), and even the ghettoization of teaching and research related to diversity (Baldesty, 2003), it becomes apparent that academic spaces are a powerful research site for understanding discourses of diversity. Indeed, it is one of the first places in which many students are introduced to the idea advanced by Julien (1999) that “they too are racialized, that race in this hemisphere is not black baggage but, rather, American baggage” (Cited in Ho, 2002, p. 63). More specifically, the work of multicultural education, and more recently, the diversity course requirement found in some institutions, has been an effort to help all students understand that “they too must be carrying baggage that...[they] have yet to recognize as the unclaimed luggage of their own historical past and present” (Ho, 2002, p. 63). Thus higher education is a crucial space for understanding issues of privilege and power. In fact Young and Braziel (2006) are so convinced of the importance of the academy in reproducing social formations that they assert that:

Of all social sectors and public institutions, the academy most resolutely perpetuates a core of ideas and foundations of knowledge...and while it is a malleable, evolving body, it remains intractable in its racialized foundations, witnessed perhaps most visibly in recent debates and Supreme Court decisions about affirmative action, but no less palpably in its formation of disciplines and its construction of knowledge. (p. 2)

As such, to study diversity discourses in higher education is to study the constitutive and representational machinations of diversity, power and difference in U.S. society.

#### Conclusion

In summary, I propose to uncover multiple, competing discourses about what diversity is, should be, and should do. These discourses have material consequences for various groups. The discourses emerge from and reproduce various positionalities, as well as historical and present-day interactions. Additionally, these discourses are interdiscursive in that they are reinforced not only by historical discourses but also contemporary political and educational discourses and ideologies and are not simply autonomous expressions of present day understandings. Therefore this dissertation examines how discourses of diversity are contextually grounded in the multiple subject positions social actors inhabit, and how they relate to broader ideologies about cultural and social politics in educational institutions. Democratic ideals and social justice ideas of equity and inclusion that supposedly drive diversity initiatives in the U.S. are also addressed.

Such a study is vitally important as the nation's institutions continue to address demands to "level the playing field" for racial and ethnic minorities that were historically denied the full rights of citizenship and who continue to face systemic marginalization. To understand the multiple conceptualizations of diversity enacted in a higher education institutional space is to build knowledge about how issues of equity and inclusion are being dealt with in this moment in U.S. history. It is in the best interest of those who lead and participate in institutions of higher education to understand the multiple discourses on diversity and the consequences of these on the success potential of historically marginalized individuals. Fairclough (2003) asserts:

Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. (p. 124)

That is my aim in this project—to contextualize multiply occurring discourses of diversity by illuminating their interdiscursive elements and analyzing how they resist and reproduce the dominant

social order, and how they implicate equity/inequity and inclusion/exclusion. Without this added layer of understanding and critical reflection as Habermas proposes (Miller, 2005), institutions will continue in their attempts to harness diversity with limited success given the acontextual nature and oversimplified categorical approaches of present day diversity efforts.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Critical Review of the Emergence of Diversity Discourses

While the term diversity has taken center stage in contemporary discourses on higher education, it is important to illuminate its emergence from the ideas of affirmative action in the late 1960s and 1970s to its evolution to multicultural ideals in the 1990s. Despite its metamorphoses in different historical moments, the ideas of inclusion and equity have been at the center of these efforts. The movement has been centered on increasing access, valuing difference, and realizing the potential of a diverse society where all members are equally equipped to succeed. Thus at the center of historical and contemporary evolutions of these ideals is a social justice mandate to redress the challenges of the past by promoting equality for all U.S. Americans, enabling the inclusion of various perspectives, and ensuring that all persons can productively contribute to society without institutional limitations or social boundaries.

The first wave of this move towards social justice in contemporary U.S. culture as it relates to the full inclusion of all North Americans began with the civil rights era. The culmination of the movement was the affirmative action policies of the early 1970s, that required U.S. institutions to take action to redress past discrimination by ensuring equal access for historically marginalized persons (Thomas, 1997). The key words and phrases in this wave were affirmative action, quotas, and access. As the civil rights movement created a federal urgency to redress past discrimination, it also led to a reconfiguration of some U.S. institutions, like higher education, to structurally include those left out of the American mainstream (Gutierrez, 1994).

Specifically in the middle of the 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement, U.S. higher education institutions began to create programs, departments, and centers dedicated to the study of specific racial and ethnic minorities in response to the increasing numbers of Africans, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans in colleges and universities; the freedom movements of the 1960s

began a tide of open access to higher education for groups who historically had been left out of the fold. The arrival of these groups in such large numbers “taxed the former habits and attitudes of institutions of higher education” forcing them to reevaluate the curriculum in light of the new groups entering higher education institutions (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 157). Additionally, while the civil rights efforts of the 1940s and 1950s “sought slow, peaceful, change through assimilation, through petitions for governmental beneficence, and through appeals to white liberal guilt...” the 1960s took a sharp political turn as communities began to reject assimilation and agitate for “cultural autonomy and national self determination” (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 158). In short, the importance of cultural specificity emerged, nationalism took center stage and African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans fought for a measure of freedom, acknowledgement and sovereignty.

These shifts led students on college campuses to lobby for separate programs and centers that would function as safe spaces for the recognition and study of racial and ethnic differences. These efforts led to the creation of African American, Asian American, Hispanic and Native American ethnic centers and programs at some colleges and universities. The ideals identified with this part of the movement for social justice for historically marginalized racial and ethnic “minorities” were self determination, nationalism and resistance. In fact the late 1970s saw “the emergence of professional associations such as the National Council of Black Studies, the National Association of Interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies, the National Association of Chicano Studies, and the Association for Asian American Studies,” augmenting “the increasing permanence...of the study of race and ethnicity,” group relations in U.S. history, and the limits to the full actualization of certain communities (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 159). Thus this movement for ethnic studies programs illuminates the ongoing national dialogue to understand and affirm the culture and history of historically marginalized groups. The movement also reflects ongoing efforts by those communities to expose

the machinations of privilege in the past and present and in so doing, create space for dialogue on how to equalize the playing field and fully include those restricted to the margins.

While the 1960s and 1970s ushered in affirmative action, ideals regarding equal access, and the affirmation and recognition of the contributions and history of the racially marginalized, the 1980's ushered in charges of reverse discrimination by conservatives during the Reagan presidency (Gutierrez, 1994). This backlash against the social justice efforts of previous decades created space for agitation against affirmative action and ongoing efforts for equity and inclusion. In the midst of the backlash, affirmative action came under attack, as did all efforts to level the playing field. Rather than fostering unity, dissenters assumed that these efforts were fostering disunity and giving unfair privilege to people of color (Omi & Winant, 1994). On the other hand, proponents of the social justice movement for the historically marginalized realized that the work of the movement was incomplete. Yet it was also evident that the movement could not continue under the umbrella of a polarizing policy like affirmative action, ethnic nationalism or even the ethnic studies programs at some universities. All three of these initiatives spawned derision and distrust rather than creating space to interrogate the limitations to the equity and full inclusion of marginalized ethnic and racial groups in U.S. society. Thus it became apparent that the movement had to rearticulate its values using a new rhetoric.

The idea that emerged in the 1990s was multiculturalism, which began to take center stage in the movement for social justice. A second wave of social justice as it relates to race relations in the U.S. was birthed in the early 1990s under the umbrella of multiculturalism. Overall, the hallmark of multiculturalism is the importance of engaging all forms of difference to produce a more democratic society. Cleckley (1997) suggested that the ideas of multiculturalism that emerged in the 1990s promoted “understanding, order, and peaceful coexistence” (p. 3). She went on to assert that “Americans must learn to appreciate...[the] values beliefs, and way of life” of the other (Cleckley,

1997, p. 4). While she argued that “the demand for greater equality by those considered less than equal has contributed to societal unrest and division,” she still affirmed that the aim of multiculturalism “is to engender respect for racial, cultural, and ethnic groups...” (Cleckley, 1997, p. 4). Thus embedded in her definition are ideals centered on the social justice efforts of the previous decades to promote understanding, create an appreciation for difference, level the playing field, and create space for the inclusion and equity of the historically marginalized. Multiculturalism continued to evolve in the 1990s to the extent that scholars even began to see oppositions and contradictions within the movement and multiple ways of conceptualizing the type of change that leads to a democratic society (McLaren, 1994).

In fact by the middle of the 1990s, multiculturalism was being problematized by its detractors as the greatest threat to unity in the U.S. on a national level, and in academe it was seen as a euphemism for watering down the curriculum to include non-essential works (Stam & Shohat, 1994). The rhetoric of individuals arguing against multiculturalism, from both conservative and progressive positions, spurred proponents of the movement to argue decisively in favor of multiculturalism. Such scholars include Stam and Shohat (1994) who suggested that while:

Neoconservatives caricature multiculturalism as calling for the violent jettisoning of European classics and of ‘western civilization as an area of study,’ multiculturalism is actually an assault not on Europe or Europeans but on Eurocentrism—on the procrustean forcing of cultural heterogeneity into a single paradigmatic perspective in which Europe is seen as the unique source of meaning, as the world’s center of gravity, as ontological ‘reality’ to the rest of the world’s shadow. (p. 296)

Thus Stam and Shohat (1994) argued that multiculturalism is a movement against the centering of whiteness in North American society rather than an assault on persons of European descent. Given the contestation of multiculturalism in the middle of the 1990s, Stam and Shohat (1994) were among

the voices arguing for its relevance. Despite the efforts of such scholars, however, there were also proponents of the ideals espoused by multiculturalism who, from a progressive perspective, felt that it was doomed to fail due to its oversimplification. Specifically in 1994, Wallace argued that:

Multiculturalism is not the promised land. As employed by universities, museums and advertising companies, the utopian ideal of a multicultural philosophy becomes a pragmatic institutional technique for neutralizing the myriad economic, political, and social demands of diversity... [M]ulticulturalism doesn't necessarily redistribute power or resources. (p. 258)

Writing in the same period as Stam and Shohat (1994), Wallace (1994) argued that multiculturalism is not necessarily suited to address the social justice imperatives espoused originally by the civil rights movement, and subsequently affirmative action, and the self determination movements of that period. Thus even in the mid 1990s, it was evident that external and internal challenges to multiculturalism called for a rearticulating of the social justice mandate for a truly democratic society where even the historically marginalized can be successful.

In light of the challenges to multiculturalism, the word diversity began to emerge as a new symbol in the quest for social justice in the middle to late 1990s (Stiehm, 1994), representing the third wave in the social justice movement that began in the 1950s. While it is sometimes used interchangeably with multiculturalism, it is more widely accepted in academic and corporate circles for its simple avowal of difference. While the word has been used symbolically in efforts geared towards equity and inclusion, in general and in the last ten years, it has primarily represented the idea of valuing and celebrating difference. It is almost as if the calls for social justice symbolically represented by affirmative action and multiculturalism created an environment that was far too contentious, encouraging retrenchment and retreat in an effort to avoid the continued alienation and agitation of detractors of the movement. Thus for many years, the word diversity became a safe way

to mobilize the social justice imperatives of the 1960's and beyond without calling for a total change of the status quo as earlier waves of the movement advocated (Wallace, 1994).

Beginning in the early 2000s however, the word diversity has been increasingly mobilized in conjunction with the words equity and inclusion (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005), representing a new shift in the evolutionary life cycle of issues of equity, inclusion, and difference in U.S. history. This shift represents the fourth wave and a return to the early ideas of the movement, which include valuing and celebrating difference, but also includes issues of representation, a level playing field and the full inclusion of historically marginalized groups in U.S. society. This fourth wave solidly plants us in the present historical moment in the U.S. context.

In some U.S. institutions, diversity is now conceptualized as a process-centered phenomenon that includes representation *and* ongoing efforts to live up to the mandates of a democratic society where all persons are equally positioned to succeed and are equally included in society (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Yet despite its growing popularity, this definition is in stark contrast to more popular definitions of diversity as categorical. In fact many institutions such as the government, education and corporations still favor a definition of diversity as the representation of racial minorities and the celebration of difference while ignoring the inequities still embedded in educational institutions and in U.S. corporate culture (Gurin, Dey, Gurin & Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado, 2005). For example, Jackson (1999a) posits that in corporations, minorities still have to bear the burden of assimilating to a Eurocentric bias as evidenced through the need to code-switch. Thus minorities must employ tactics of communication that reinscribe a dual consciousness (Fanon, 1967) that is not experienced by others. Also, Milem, Chang and Antonio (2005) argue that students of color are still underperforming in comparison to their White counterparts, faculty of color are still underrepresented in the academy, and the curriculum and overall structure of the academy remains Eurocentric. These issues exist because educational and corporate institutions

harness diversity in numbers, but have not grasped the role of other dimensions affecting inclusion and equity. Having a diverse student body does not necessarily make for equitable educational outcomes (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, & Bartee, 2005). In the same vein, having more ethnic minorities does not challenge the monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision that is still at the center of operation in most U.S. institutions (Goldberg, 1994; Tierney & Jackson, 2002). Yet as North America continues to diversify and as the numbers of the historically marginalized continue to increase in its institutions, the interrogation of these issues will become crucial to the success of U.S. society as a whole.

Dating back to the social justice efforts of the 1950s, the affirmative action efforts of the 1970's, and the rhetoric of multiculturalism in the 1990s, the word diversity is the newest discursive symbol for efforts to foster the equity and inclusion of historically marginalized groups in the U.S. context. For these reasons, the word diversity carries symbolic, cultural, institutional and national weight. As such, I posit that it is a key entry point into understanding issues of equity and inclusion for historically marginalized communities in U.S. institutions.

Critical Review of Race Relations in the U.S.

*Race will always be at the center of the American experience.*

(Michael Omi & Howard Winant, 1994, p. 5)

Avant-Mier and Hassian (2002) suggest that given layers of legal, political and cultural issues, contemporary America is caught in the throes of a dialectical tension between two discourses: color consciousness in the name of identity politics and color blindness in the name of minimizing race and maximizing the focus on the individual. In the current epoch, these two discourses form the foundation of individual understandings of diversity and corporate and educational discourses of diversity. In this section, I address the historical evolution of these discourses, and their effect in constructing and policing matters of diversity in the current epoch.

The prologue for this section highlights a central focus in this dissertation. Specifically, I contend along with scholars such as Goldberg (1994), McLaren (1994), West (1993) and others, that one cannot grapple with the issue of diversity in the U.S. without considering the centrality of race historically and in constructing the current social milieu. Indeed, Omi and Winant (1994) assert that the evolution of color blind rhetoric in the U.S. is a product of the civil rights movement and the new social movements of the 1960s. These social movements asserted the specificity of race and challenged the hegemony of the monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision that had been the foundation of the U.S. experience for hundreds of years (Goldberg, 1994); expectedly, color blind rhetoric emerged to reinforce the validity of this Eurovision by shifting the conversation on group rights to individual rights. Therefore, to provide a rationale for studying discourses of diversity which descend from this complicated history of social action and contestation, I describe the evolution of Goldberg's (1994) notion of a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision. I also consider the historical and contemporary issues that fostered this Eurovision, feeding into the formation of the dialectic of color consciousness and color blindness in contemporary North America.

Goldberg (1994) suggests that monoculturalism gained prominence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the critical years of nation building. The period of 1860 and beyond was pivotal in U.S. history given the civil war and the quest for citizenship for historically marginalized persons, yet I contend that the seeds of the struggles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were planted during the formation of the first colonies in the 1600s. Takaki (1993) argues that when the first pilgrims landed in the U.S., they were met by indigenous peoples who were viewed as a hindrance to the spatial expansion of the pilgrims, launching campaigns of land seizures and displacement. After years of struggle, the pilgrims had seized upon a new opportunity to claim and to own something in the name of progress. This vision was not restricted to the acquisition of land alone but expanded in the near future to a hunger for economic prosperity. Through this hunger, slaves were brought to the U.S. to facilitate

this progressive economic vision and White, as well as other indentured servants, were held prisoners to its will (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Takaki, 1993). Yet this progressive vision of the early settlers was not limited to economic prosperity; Morison (1992) asserts that U.S. history overall has been a project to define the “new white man” (p. 38). She contends that in an effort to “allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation, this new white man embarked on a project to otherize and marginalize those that stood in the way of his progress and those that could advance it” (p. 38). It is this foundation that led to the ruptures during the civil rights movement and even earlier in U.S. history as the marginalized agitated against the monocultural ethnoracial eurovision that had become the standard for social practices and overall success (Goldberg, 1994).

This otherizing project originating in government policies was critical to the formation of the racial classifications of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999). These racial classifications evolved into typologies establishing a three-race hierarchy with Whites being the last and most developed link in “the great chain of being” (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 15). Continuing onward from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these typologies rationalized the oppression of non-white peoples and those who were economically disadvantaged in the name of civilizing and Christianizing the less fortunate both in the U.S. and on the world’s stage. In the U.S., however, these typologies legitimized legal and political actions which marginalized non-whites, and set in place a cycle of socio-historical and socio-political relations of oppression and marginalization that reified and continuously re-articulated the centrality of whiteness (Tierney & Jackson, 2002; Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

This monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision performed through whiteness ideology took off so much so that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had become *the* foundation for social interactions in the North American social milieu. This then fostered the concept of the melting pot and assimilationist theories about the formation of “one American

subject” with European values serving as its base. In higher education, for example, this move sanctioned the proliferation and entrenchment of western ways of knowing (Takaki, 1993). Parillo (2005) asserts that this monocultural vision grounded in whiteness was enhanced through a number of events in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: World War I, the immigration laws of the 1920s, the world depression of the 1930s and World War II. All of these events limited immigration to the U.S., leading to a decline in the infusion of new cultures into the social polity. In such a climate, discourses advocating cultural specificity declined, creating space for the second generation of White ethnics to be infused into the center (Parillo, 2005). This further enhanced the centrality of whiteness by creating a critical mass of those who subscribed to its ideology.

Despite this tendency, however, change in the U.S. came about in a sweeping way due to the civil rights movement and the new social movements of the 1960’s (Goldberg, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994). Groups who had long been denied the promises of citizenship and democracy began to cry out for change. These movements led the federal government to make drastic changes in the 1960’s including the passing of affirmative action laws. Thus by the end of the 1960s, legal remedies to redress past discrimination which had been sanctioned by whiteness ideology were underway.

Omi and Winant (1994) suggest that while marginalized communities began to make progress, the social, economic and political upheavals of the 1970s and 1980s led to a backlash against the movement for equality and subsequently the retrenchment of a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision. Omi and Winant (1994) assert that “the far right was attempting to develop a new white identity, to reassert the very meaning of *whiteness*, which had been rendered unstable and unclear by the minority challenges of the 1960s” (p. 120). Specifically the losses in war and the overall economic challenges of the period led many North Americans to begin to question whether the U.S. was still number one on the world’s stage. In an effort to find a scapegoat for the national ills; many U.S. Americans began to blame the decline and dislocation of the 1970s and after on the social

movements of the 1960s, fostering a racial framing of the national crisis (Omi & Winant, 1994). This scapegoating fostered the emergence of the right, the new right and the neoconservatives, who at different levels and in different ways hoped to assert the centrality of whiteness and address the “reverse discrimination” now facing Whites in the U.S. (Omi & Winant, 1994). In the 1980s Omi and Winant (1994) contend that the Reagan administration contributed to this thinking by fighting affirmative action. Reagan officials contended that the U.S. was adequately restructured to cultivate the success of minorities, so ongoing actions to redress their historical oppression were in fact a threat to Caucasian freedoms (Omi & Winant, 1994). The most provocative argument made by the Reagan administration, neoconservatives, and right wing politicians during that time was that White people had become the new minorities facing discrimination. During the period, some Whites argued for a color blind society claiming that affirmative action was in fact the antithesis of the call of the civil rights movement for racial equality. Their argument was that those same laws were now racially marginalizing Whites. Through these arguments, they re-articulated the rhetoric of the civil rights movement to serve a new purpose (Omi & Winant, 1994)—the reestablishment of a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision as the primary organizing force in U.S. society, through a minimization of the ongoing inequities facing some groups in the U.S. context.

Thus, while some people argued for a color blind society, proponents of the civil rights movement were arguing for a color conscious society to redress historical, economic and political marginalization, and to create a truly multicultural society. While this struggle was fought on the legal and political terrains, it also took place on the educational and corporate terrains. For example, this struggle was exemplified by the proliferation of multicultural education policies and practices, the development of theories such as critical race theory (McLaren, 1994), and the proliferation of the ideas of scholars like Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* on the international level. Thus multiculturalists and critical race theorists argued for reorganizing institutions and valuing

differences, while neoconservatives argued for a race-less society in the name of national solidarity. In corporate America, a color conscious discourse fostered by the civil rights movement of the 1960's and subsequent laws to redress past discrimination led to a proliferation of diversity trainings and the commodification of multiculturalism and diversity as sources of "competitive advantage" (Bendick, Egan & Lofhjelm, 2001; Goldberg, 1994).

In the contemporary U.S., this dialectic of color blindness and color consciousness nurtured through the historical evolution of whiteness ideology continues to be evident in public discourse. In recent years there have been increased charges of reverse discrimination in hiring practices and in higher education admissions policies. The most recent are the two University of Michigan cases leading to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) project to articulate the value of diversity in educational outcomes (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). In the corporate sector, organizations are continuing in their efforts to operationalize diversity by institutionalizing it through human resource practices for example (Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001). While scholars like Baldesty (2003), Harris (2003), Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1998), Milem, Chang and Antonio, 2005, Williams, Berger, and McClendon (2005) and McLaren (1994) espouse the values of diversity in organizations, diversity policies are still met with distaste and sometimes overwhelming resistance in many organizations. On a national level for example, this struggle was starkly evident in the 2008 presidential election when U.S. Americans began to seriously contend with the idea of the first president of color. President Obama's "A more Perfect Union" speech was one attempt to manage the fragmentation that the upcoming election seemed to be magnifying.

While Johnston and Packer's 1987 report, *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* foreshadowed the increasing diversity of the U.S. workplace moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fine 1996), and while scholars suggest that institutions of higher education will become more racially and culturally diverse, many U.S. Americans are still unsure about whether diversity is the purveyor of

good or a catalyst of national dislocation and fragmentation (Hon, Wiegold & Chance, 1999). For many people, the need to operationalize diversity given the ongoing demographic changes in the U.S. is strong; increasing color consciousness in the name of destabilizing the power of whiteness to cultivate the success of racial minorities is a major part of that equation (Allen, 1995; Fine, 1991; Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). For others, fragmentation, perceptions of reverse discrimination, and the historical centrality of race in articulating issues of diversity stand as a hindrance to moving beyond race and overall national healing (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994).

In recent history, the dialectic of race consciousness and race blindness has formed the bedrock of discourses of diversity creating two contentious schools of thought in North America's national, institutional, social and political life. Undoubtedly, as this overview has demonstrated, critiques of legalized race consciousness in favor of ethnic minorities (e.g. affirmative action policies) arose to redress social, historical, legal and political race consciousness in favor of Whites. Yet this same critique is raising alarm and resulting in a discourse valorizing race blindness. Despite the avowal of reverse discrimination made by Whites, Wander, Martin and Nakayama (1991) suggest that the oppression of minorities still ensures less socio-economic and socio-cultural progress for these groups compared with White European Americans. For example in educational contexts, students of color are still underperforming in comparison to their White counterparts, and despite the social progress of the last few decades, these students still express feelings of marginalization in the majority of educational institutions due to a prevailing monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision (González, 2002; Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998; Laden, 1999; Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005; Orbe, 2004). Thus U.S. educational institutions do not provide equal opportunities for success. Therefore, how diversity is a contemporary symbol of these social justice ideals geared towards challenging the machinations of privilege is worthy of scholarly attention.

Diversity initiatives are a response to negative racial hierarchies that reinscribe Eurocentric standards while attempting to facilitate the success of historically marginalized racial and ethnic minorities in U.S. society. Scholars such as Bonilla-Silva (2006) assert that the U.S. cannot become a color blind society until its institutions like higher education become color blind in their policies and practices. Therefore, interrogating diversity discourses from individuals who are leaders in educational institutions is a critical project in fostering what president Lyndon Johnson called “equality in fact and in result.”

### Conclusion

This historical overview of the development of a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision through whiteness ideology that has induced the contemporary dialectic of racial consciousness and race blindness is the foundation of current discourses of diversity. I contend that while educational and corporate organizations are trying to institutionalize progressive visions of diversity in the name of demographic changes and even justice in some instances, these visions may not be manifested fully given the historicity of current individual and institutional discourses of diversity (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, & Bartee, 2005; Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001; Richard & Johnson, 2001). A major gap in the literature, therefore, is the understanding of multiply occurring conceptualizations of diversity, the ideologies they encourage and the ramifications for individual and institutional agency.

A deeper knowledge of what diversity means to those who influence policy and practice is needed, and greater attention must be given to the social processes its definition(s) encourage. As this historical overview has shown, understanding diversity in U.S. higher educational institutions requires a deep appreciation of the historical, economic, political and social discourses that have led to its multiple conceptualizations among individuals and in institutional and organizational contexts.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

*“All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.”*

(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293)

To answer the research questions proposed in chapter 1, I grounded my analysis in critical discourse analysis (CDA). This approach posits that language is a fundamental part of social life. Fairclough (2003), one of the founders of CDA, suggests that through a critical analysis of discourse, scholars can understand the operations of discourse in perpetuating asymmetrical power structures, ideologies and the general social order. Several tenets of CDA are useful for this dissertation:

- a) Meaning arises through human categorizing and labeling processes which occur through historical and social interactions.
- b) Discourse constitutes the social world and also reflects it.
- c) Through social interaction humans create common meanings and compete over what is true and what is false, making discourse a site of struggle.

Thus this theoretical and methodological approach will enable me to explore diversity discourses.

More specifically, it will allow me to do the following:

1. Delve deeply into multiple conceptualizations of diversity.
2. Demonstrate how views of diversity are constructed through the articulation and connection of multiple discourses, such as the connection of discourses of race with discourses of diversity.
3. Highlight the relationships between social processes, such as institutional practices, and discourses of diversity.

4. Understand status hierarchies and levels of agency as they are enabled and constrained by different views of diversity.

(Fairclough, 1993; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

#### Procedures

Given my interest in the role of universities in reflecting and constituting larger social processes, I chose two universities as my research sites: (1) University of New Mexico (UNM); and (2) University of Minnesota (U of M). These two universities were selected because they represent large public institutions in two regions with very different cultural compositions. I selected the University of New Mexico because it is in a state that is considered a minority-majority because of the large population of Hispanics within the area. Additionally the University of New Mexico hired a vice provost for equity and inclusion within the last two years. This administrator is the highest ranking diversity officer at this university. I chose the University of Minnesota because it is in a predominantly Caucasian state of the U.S. The University of Minnesota has had a full scale diversity division in place since 1996, with the current highest ranking diversity officer holding the title of vice president *and* vice provost for diversity and equity. This was one of the crucial reasons in the site selection as this difference created a vital lens for observing potential differences in the diversity discourses depending on the longevity of the offices. In fact the vice president and vice provost for diversity and equity from the University of Minnesota spoke during a luncheon at the University of New Mexico in the Spring of 2009 to share her diversity plan and promising practices in the area of institutional effectiveness around diversity. I attended the luncheon as part of my field research and observed the University of Minnesota diversity officer communicate a vision of what could be and the potential pitfalls as the University of New Mexico community builds and establishes its diversity program. Finally, both of these institutions are public and they admit students from diverse socio-

economic backgrounds. In summary, these institutions have a parallel structure, with added geographic, demographic and contextual differences that add breadth to the study.

### *Sampling*

Given the nature of this topic, I employed a purposive sampling strategy that allowed me to identify a variety of subject positions around discourses of diversity. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) assert that qualitative work “is known for being...emergent, and...somewhat unruly” (p. 66). Therefore my goal was to sample until patterns of discourse were repeated and I reached a critical threshold of interpretive understanding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Mason, 2002).

I recruited participants by searching each university’s website for campus leaders. Directories that listed faculty leaders, department chairs and student leaders proved crucial in identifying leaders. The leaders were sent e-mail invitations to participate, which can be viewed in appendix A. I sent over 120 e-mails to potential interviewees. This resulted in 35 total participants, including administrators, faculty and students. The sample at each campus was generated by interviewing campus leaders who by virtue of their position speak for and act on behalf of university constituents. This allowed me to limit the pool of potential participants and to further extend the ideas of standpoint theory, which suggests that roles are also a crucial part of individual positionalities. Following, I explain the distribution of research participants (the full demographics sheet is available in appendix B):

- *Administrators*

Five administrators were interviewed at the University of New Mexico and four were interviewed at the University of Minnesota, including high-ranking administrators for equity and inclusion initiatives, deans, ethnic center personnel and other high-ranking and mid-level administrators. This ensured that I captured both high ranking and frontline personnel who lead change efforts, create policies and interact with students.

- *Faculty*

Nine faculty members were interviewed at the University of New Mexico and five were interviewed at the University of Minnesota, with an emphasis on department chairs or elected faculty leaders. For example, I interviewed 9 department chairs and a number of faculty senate leaders. Such a strategy ensured that I captured a group that is at the forefront of debate over policies and change efforts at each campus. Given the visibility of these individuals, they are more likely to speak for large segments of the university community and their ideas may reflect prevalent ideologies or efforts to change them at the universities under investigation.

- *Students*

Six students were interviewed at the University of New Mexico and seven were interviewed at the University of Minnesota. Emphasis was placed on student leaders, both graduate and undergraduate, who lead student associations such as the Graduate and Professional Student Association at the University of New Mexico, for example. Again the rationale is that being highly visible and connected, these students are endowed with the positional authority to affect change on their respective campuses and thus their views may represent the dominant ideologies or efforts to change them at each campus. Additionally, by virtue of their high visibility positions, these persons may have a deeper understanding of the multiple perspectives their constituents hold and the issues enabling and constraining diversity related efforts. In short, they may have a greater awareness of the social issues around diversity on their campuses leading to a richness of perspectives. Tables 1 and 2 provide additional information on the distribution of research participants.

Table 1: University of Minnesota Demographics

Race	Female	Male
Asian and White, mixed	0	1
Black, African American	0	1
Chicano/a, Hispanic, Latino/a, Latin American, Mexican American	1	1
Native American	0	0
White	6	4
Other	0	1

Table 2: University of New Mexico Demographics

Race	Female	Male
Asian and White, mixed	0	0
Black, African American	1	3
Chicano/a, Hispanic, Latino/a, Latin American, Mexican American	2	2
Native American	1	0
White	0	9
Other	1	0

#### Data Collection

The goals of this study were met by interviewing research participants to gain an understanding of their individual views of diversity. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) propose qualitative interviewing to gather these positional understandings. Specifically, Lindlof and Taylor suggest that qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to look “deeply and broadly into subjective realities” (p. 170). This was useful for understanding subjective articulations of diversity. Yet Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also assert that “interview talk is the rhetoric of socially situated speakers” (p. 172). Thus in-depth qualitative interviewing allowed me to explore recalled social interactions and even historical meaning-making projects that individuals expressed, all contributing to their subjective understandings of diversity. I employed a semi-structured interview guide to enhance the sharing of subjective understandings. This approach to data collection helped to illuminate the experiences of faculty, administrators and students who may be less comfortable sharing their views in a public setting. The interview settings were designed to inspire confidentiality which enhanced disclosure of

sensitive information. Informed consent and IRB procedures were followed (the informed consent form can be found in appendix C).

The texts for this study were the interviews with faculty, administrators and students. I chose the interview data as my unit of analysis because I believe, in line with the ontology of critical discourse analysis, that discourse and texts reflect and constitute reality (Fairclough, 2003). Thus an understanding of social processes may be gained by critically analyzing these discursively produced texts.

It is important to note that the interview data is co-constructed as a result of the interaction between myself and research participants. My identity as a Nigerian American individual may have affected the types of information interviewees shared. Arguably, the interviews may have been different if my physical and cultural attributes were different. This is endemic to research endeavors, yet it is important to acknowledge how my body and perceptions of my positionality may have affected the research process. The interview guide is available in appendix D and includes questions such as, “How does your campus define diversity?” and “How do you define diversity?” Such questions lent to revealing individual understandings of diversity and the social processes they reflect.

### Data Analysis

CDA scholars assert that it “is not a uniform or homogenous method, but rather an inherently interdisciplinary activity that may draw on various theoretical backgrounds and methodological tools” (Tupper, 2008, p. 224; see also Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Thus there is tremendous variance in CDA to the extent that some scholars encourage the creation of a unique analytical package that combines “elements from different discourse analytical perspectives” and is driven by one’s research agenda (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 4). According to Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) “such multiperspectival work is not only permissible but positively valued in most

forms of discourse analysis” (p. 4). These ideas legitimized the appropriation and utilization of a particular approach to answer my research questions. In this study, I employed three key steps in conducting the analysis:

1. *Descriptive Reading*: I read the interview transcripts descriptively multiple times to build familiarity with the responses. Initially I examined the data from each university separately and then looked across the responses. I found no substantial differences in the responses based on the institution, therefore, I considered all the data as a single corpus.

2. *Strategic Thematic Analysis*: Then I conducted a thematic reading focusing on clusters of meaning that stood out by frequency and intensity. The research questions provided a general frame to guide my reading of the data at this level of the analysis. In this way, I read the transcripts for themes that pointed to understandings of diversity, institutional practices, and the ideological underpinnings of such conceptualizations. Therefore, although emergent themes were grounded in the interviewees discourse, the analytical reading was driven by the research questions. For example I looked for:

- Identity construction: Relates to how interviewees constructed their identities and levels of agency in relation to particular subject positions and issues in their discourse. In the context of this study many subjects did this by constructing themselves as leaders divested and/or invested with agency in particular contexts (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

In this way, I was able to see particular discourses that are critically informed. This analytical reading required me to go over each interview transcript multiple times. Specifically, the strands of discourse in the text were analyzed by focusing on reoccurring ideas and issues. These reoccurring elements were sorted into categories of discourse representing particular themes, ideas, and ideologies. These categories of discourse were identified as they were “repeated to the extent that they” left an impression on me and in so doing provided an overall understanding of the discourse(s) represented in the interview data (Yin, 2007, p. 79). This approach is also consistent with Collier’s (2005) data

analytic method grounded in uncovering positionalities and situated experiences embedded in interview data.

3. *Critical Analysis*: Finally, I analyzed the categories of discourse with an eye toward the social conditions they reflect, produce and encourage. I did this by oscillating between the discourse and existing scholarship to understand the functions of the emergent themes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). As I moved from the particular themes and the discourse they constitute, to the social conditions reflected by the discourse, I was able to analyze local meanings emanating from the texts and understand how a range of ideologies were constructed and reified “through various implications of the discourse” (Yin, 2007, p. 79). I employed this methodological standard based on Yin’s (2007) assertion that “it is in the micro-structures that ideologies are particularized and substantiated” (p. 79). Therefore at this third stage, I considered the relationships between subject positions, status hierarchies, ideologies and social practices.

One of the strengths of my methods is that they ensure that “the move to critique occurs from within” the texts (O’Regan, 2006, p. 184). Where other CDA theorists generally begin at the level of critically reading and deconstructing a text, O’Regan (2006) suggests that analysis begin at the descriptive level; this ensures validity in that the analysis of a text emanates from within that text and moves out to consider the social issues reflected in and by a text.

Therefore, this analysis took me from understanding individual views of diversity to exploring the institutional and social practices they encourage, to finally revealing the ideologies established and reinforced by those dimensions. I read and analyzed the data descriptively and then with attention to theoretically grounded and critically informed categories of discourses. Overall, I employed an approach that fits the aims of this study to reveal how discourses of diversity are fixed into particular moments and points where meaning converges (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

While I am not interested in generalizing, yet because of standpoint theory, I was interested in patterns that emerged with regard to who is reproducing different conceptualizations of diversity and how this may/may not reify other social dynamics and ideological positions. Therefore because race and ethnic positioning are often intermingled with discourses of diversity, I include the racial or ethnic identification of each participant using the labels they chose. I also include the roles of each participant as administrator, faculty, or student. This detail about respondents enabled me to apply standpoint theory, which emphasizes social positioning, cultural background and status positions as standpoints.

#### *Reliability and Validity Measures*

Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) assert that the reliability of a CDA study may be ascertained by ensuring the transparency of the analysis. One does this by clearly stating the way in which the analysis was conducted. They also assert that the reliability and validity of a study may be assessed by its fruitfulness; specifically, does it provide new insight into the social process under investigation and does it foster emancipation? I ensure the reliability and validity of my research design and my findings through these two standards (Fairclough, 2003). The categories of discourse presented in the subsequent analysis chapters meet the criteria of transparency and fruitfulness as I feature the voices of participants by including numerous direct quotations; this speaks to the issue of validity. Finally the oscillation between interview data and existing scholarship added to the fruitfulness of this study as new understandings of discourses of diversity and the social dynamics established by these discourses emerged.

#### Conclusion

My approach to CDA allowed me to observe situated understandings of diversity and the ideological workings of discourses of diversity. I sought to illuminate multiply occurring discourses of diversity, multiple layers of meaning, social dynamics constituted by the discourses and the

ideologies therein (Mason, 2002; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The critical framework enabled me to interrogate the ways in which discourse asserts privilege, “shapes the discourse of others” and affects other social processes (Fine, 1991, p. 269). It also enabled me to critique the material conditions reflected and produced by the various discourses of diversity and their influence on change efforts.

My critical perspective is reflected in my chosen analytical methods. This perspective follows from Fine’s (1991) assertion that studies utilizing organizations as a research site must begin to employ critical methods and theories like standpoint theory to expose the workings of power and levels of agency. Fine’s recommendation highlights the efficacy of my research design. Therefore the chosen research methodology helps me to understand the various discourses of diversity and the social dynamics implicated therein.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF DIVERSITY

This chapter answers research question one: What conceptualizations of diversity emerge in interview discourses? Five dominant categories of discourse emerged in relation to diversity and its attendant issues. In addition to illuminating particular understandings of diversity, reflecting the status positions of speakers, and signaling views of current socio-cultural issues, the five categories of discourse reflect subject positions and relationships in a larger social network. Specifically these categories reflect how individuals discursively construct their understanding of, and beliefs about the self and the other in the context of a diverse society laden with socio-historical challenges and contemporary ambiguities regarding difference, power and equity. In this chapter, I describe each category of discourse and the subject positions implicated therein.

### Extreme Pluralism: The More Types of Difference Included, the Better for the University

One of the key conceptualizations of diversity that emerged through interview transcripts privileged the idea of assembling a variety of persons, ideas and perspectives. It reflects the notion that people have cultures that are distinct, and so to be “diverse,” institutions must “have” people who are “diverse.” Interview data from administrators, faculty, and students suggest that the interviewees discourse is driven by the idea that the inclusion of as many forms of difference as possible is the ideal to which institutions should aspire. It represents the idea that difference is good, and that assembling different types of people is the ideal representation of a diverse society and the very definition of diversity itself. The following comment from a White faculty member illuminates this point:

I think of diversity as being a range not only of different types--people with different types of backgrounds, different ethnicities, different genders, different sexual orientations--but it goes beyond that. It also goes hand in hand with the diversity of ideas. And particularly at

the university if you aren't open to different types of people, you're not going to be open to different types of ideas and creativity suffers for it.

This response reveals the strong emphasis on recognizing, celebrating and generally including difference; the idea of representing various races, classes, genders, ontologies and all other variations of difference is *the* definition of diversity. A White graduate student even speaks of acquiring, assembling and contriving a diverse organization in the following response to the question: "how do you define diversity?"

Basically it's not limited to a person's color of skin but it could be *contrived* from or assembled from their different backgrounds of faith, race, opinions, upbringing, socio-economic status, etc.

The idea of accumulating as much variation as possible points to the idea of checking boxes and even activates the idea of *adding diversity*. This idea of adding diversity reflects this discourse because of the notion of acquiring and filling an institution with as many "types" of people as possible. Another key assumption is that "more" diversity adds richness as the following White department chair suggested:

I guess *I would hope* that it would [be] define[d]...in a very pure and simple way. The broader the university community is in terms of the participants in the institution, students, faculty and staff, from their different backgrounds, from their ethnic backgrounds, the better the institution will be in terms of the opportunity of airing a wide range of opinions that are based on a wide range of experiences....And therefore diversity initiatives mean an attempt to have the institution and its participants be well represented of the overall community of the country...if not the world.

Interestingly, this same interviewee said that he doesn't "care" if he is "White as can possibly be" because that is not how he identifies himself. This is crucial because the interview transcripts suggest that interviewees mobilizing this discourse consider issues of difference "pure and simple."

Another key way that this idea materialized in this discourse was in the construction of international diversity as a form of difference that requires focus and attention. Specifically interviewees suggest that other forms of difference are "more basic" and easier to weave into institutional structures as compared to international diversity which requires institutional attention. The following comment from a White graduate student demonstrates this idea:

Okay, I would say I feel pretty well understood by my colleagues....We're pharmacy students so...all hundred and nine of us are together for these three years; pretty much we take every class together. So I feel like people have made an effort to understand where I come from because I'm not from the Minneapolis area--although I'm not from far away. We have a number of international students in our class and *we are sensitive* to their various education needs because English isn't their primary language and stuff. So I feel like my diversity is understood because I've seen my classmates understand other people's differences. *Also my diversity, you know I'm a twenty three year old White male.... I'm from a middle class family. I don't bring a lot of what many people would define as diversity to the classroom, but I do feel like if I was of a different background or racial heritage that I would be understood because of how I've seen my classmates treat other people.*

It is important to note that while this student includes race as another form of difference to be "understood," his comment privileges international diversity first and/or he appears to equate racial difference with international difference. Overall it is evident that this student believes different backgrounds and social heritages are already "understood." In short, bringing in "more diversity,"

and “having” more diversity is simplified, so there is space to stock up, as it were, on “more diversity” with international students, or individuals with a “different background or racial heritage.”

#### Practical and Institutional Constraints Make Diversity Challenging

The second view of diversity that emerged is the perception that while diversity may be a good idea for the “richness” that it can add to institutions and the fact that it advocates the political mandate to increase the numbers of the historically underrepresented, nevertheless its practical operations are challenging. For instance, department chairs often cited the example of worrying about how to increase the faculty of color in their department without offering additional financial incentives to these widely sought-after colleagues, and in so doing, creating “imbalances” that affect other faculty members. This perception of diversity reflects the subject position of individuals grounded in the stages of planning how to operationalize diversity.

These study participants tended to be leaders, such as department chairs, who are still trying to process how to “diversify” their departments and respond to institutional recommendations along those lines. The excerpt below exemplifies these particular issues.

This summer—*if I wanted to*—I could hire an individual of Hispanic descent. She grew up in \_\_\_\_\_. She was an undergraduate at [speaker’s institution]. Until recently she was the department head.... Well, there’s two issues here. And both of them are sort of endemic of the problem... Okay, so one of the issues is where is the money coming from to hire her? Especially in the context of the fact that there are so many departments in the College of \_\_\_\_\_ that are lower in faculty. And I’m not, I’m talking from a general perspective, but then I can be very specific. *In terms of many departments have far greater diversity needs than we do in our department.* Number two, when this faculty member ended her academic career at the University of \_\_\_\_\_, it’s my understanding that she was making about \$120,000 a year.... [As a] full professor. Well that’s about \$30,000 more per year than a majority of full

professors in my department. So that would create an *imbalance* if that kind of thing happened. It would create a *substantial imbalance*. So those are the general issues. And let's face it, in terms of faculty hires, up until recently at least, *diversity hires are a tremendous target of opportunity and therefore in my opinion, I think institutions provide a little bit greater leeway in terms of flexibility, in terms of what they are willing to provide for such individuals. I have nothing against that, it's just simply those are the facts. And they do, as a result, create imbalances.*

As a result of the difficulties in hiring faculty of color or of recruiting “qualified” graduate students of color for example, leaders like the White department chair above take a contemplative stance to diversity issues in an effort to negotiate the changing social and organizational milieu in which they are embedded. These issues come to the forefront in the narrative below.

So the flip side to the student level is—let me use graduate education as an example. You have *an applicant from an underrepresented group* whose undergraduate record is terrible. *Examination scores from the GREs are awful, letters of recommendation are very very reluctant*, what do you do? What do you do? Now in this particular case I just simply throw it out as a, ‘What if?’ What do you do? Are you doing the student any good by admitting them into a graduate program when they are going to be with individuals who are far better trained and far more capable of success in graduate school? That's a question.

This analytical approach to diversity is also reflected in the belief that there are too many constraints to orchestrate change. For example, the following White department head relates his limited choices in action due to shrinking institutional funding and an extreme economic crisis affecting higher education as a whole.

You must interview the vice president for Equity and Inclusion at the University of \_\_\_\_\_. I mean I brought up our case last year publicly during one of [the] forums. I said, “What can I do?” Well, we don't have any money right now. So no, I don't want to sound

cynical in this discussion, but *all of this must be understood in the context of reality*. And now, you know all of this must be understood in the context, we hope, of a short term reality of extreme financial crisis affecting higher education.

The “reality” here is that while diversification is not being questioned, respondents describe far too many challenges in the current social and economic climate to carry out diversity initiatives. As such the institutional and social limitations delimit the possibilities for action and create a need to re-think what diversity really means. The following statement is in response to a critical incident involving an underrepresented immigrant population that is growing in Minnesota. Students from this population created a student organization. According to this interviewee, the student group is breaking rules in this university’s student union that warrant the loss of their student space, yet because of the social dynamics taking place in the larger Minnesota context, this community may take the loss of their student space as racially driven and marginalizing. It is an exemplar that offers insight into this particular subject position.

Well *we’re doing everything we can*. We have, the problem is that [we’re] walking that line between responding to *the special needs of this population, versus going above and beyond*.... So it’s walking the line between doing the *right* thing versus being reasonable in terms of not getting too far beyond *normal* operating procedures, where we’re out kind of on a limb. That I think, that’s the strain that I feel trying to negotiate that situation. In my perspective there are some things that should be done even though they probably are not exactly what the letter of our operating procedures would say should be done. Sometimes you have to move beyond standard operating procedures.

While this self designated White administrator of the “majority culture” speaks of working outside of “*normal* operating procedures,” the reflexivity of the statement hangs on the first line: “Well we’re doing everything we can.” This statement emphasizes that everything that can be done, is being

done. The crucial idea is that the “right thing” may not be reasonable given the standards that are in place; therefore, the “right thing” may be an impossibility given the foundation of the university as grounded on the “normal procedures” that are in place. This discourse reflects a move to deflect blame and responsibility, and to reify the status quo.

#### Diversity “Work” Offers Socio-Political Currency

The third category of discourse that emerged represents a segment of people who consider diversity a new research area and a professional standard that is necessary given the social context. In general, these persons conduct research in the area, facilitate “diversity” programs, or they are generally doing work that requires them to focus on issues of difference or diversity. What is interesting about the subject position represented in this category of discourse is the entry point, which distinguishes this constellation of diversity discourse from the others. Interview transcripts suggest that the subject position produced by these voices is one in which they approach diversity issues from a theoretical, academic and professional space that is not embodied. While there is strong engagement with diversity that is centered on talking and working through solutions to ensure a “diverse” campus, there is also a desire to be acknowledged for this work.

More than just analyzing and describing challenges, research participants mobilizing this discourse are actively doing work in the area of diversity scholarship, programming, teaching and learning. Research participants voicing this discourse described themselves as “White.” Interview data also suggest that working and conducting research in the area appears to grant these persons a form of credibility and privilege that comes from doing work that serves a public good as the following interview excerpt suggests:

Since I study this, I think people listen to what I have to say a lot. If anything, they don’t necessarily argue with it so much as they might. . . . I often feel pretty understood because *I don’t have a super strong definition of what diversity is*. I kind of think of it more as *a thing I study*, so

I can be pretty tolerant of a lot of different definitions of that term and of those terms where it's always *a little project to me*.

Thus while persons in this subject position like the one above seem to value diversity and work in the area, their comments suggest that “it’s a thing...[they]...study” as evidenced through the exemplar above. This White professor and scholar professed to doing substantial scholarship and publishing in the area of diversity, yet in his narrative it is clear that it is a research area in which he doesn’t have a strong definition of key concepts and it’s a “little project” that he works on. Despite this, the interview transcripts suggest that when marginalized persons imply that these individuals don’t “get” issues of diversity as a result of their positionality, it is a personal affront. The following comment from a White male administrator illuminates this point:

There are times that I feel that because I’m not, because I’m of the *majority culture*, that there’s a perception that well *I can’t possibly get it...my views are somewhat marginalized* and not directly but that somehow there is kind of a well, devaluing of those who are from my perspective...[like] I can’t really be of much value and help. But that doesn’t come up too often, but occasionally there’s a tone and attitude that I find a little offensive. But I understand, but nonetheless it’s degrading... Well just the comments, it’s kind of a tone, ‘Well those of us who really have had this experience..., we kind of have the insight and the observations...and it’s not that you can’t add value, but that you must not understand, can’t possibly understand.’

This comment illustrates that as a result of their professional experience and scholarship around diversity, these individuals generally express a desire to have their personal voices respected and their efforts valued.

A key slippage in this discursive constellation, however, is the “majority” status that gives these individuals the privilege to pick and choose when they can engage in issues around diversity.

When the privilege is named, a discursive pivoting emerges that co-opts or utilizes particular symbols in re-centering whiteness ideology as the following exemplar from a White administrator suggests:

I understand that there are probably many reasons historically why some people might arrive at that kind of perception [that White people don't 'get it'], but nonetheless it's kind of, *it's the opposite of White privilege. It's the other side of the backpack. With the White privilege comes the ability to be devalued* because you don't have that experience of being without privilege.

This discourse attempts to minimize the status position of these speakers while magnifying the “disadvantages” of their privilege in a system grounded on racial hierarchy. However inadvertently, this discourse reflects the status of these speakers who have privileges that enable them to speak of how said privileges may lead to them being misunderstood by racial and ethnic minorities. This discursive pivoting begins to illuminate how this subject position may clash with others that are discussed in later sections in which marginalized subjects speak of embodied experiences surrounding diversity and its attendant issues of power and (in)equity.

In addition to the scholarly relationship with diversity and the individualistic nature of this discourse, these voices also spoke of diversity in terms of national and racial difference. In the following narrative, for example, a White department chair points to the difference of a colleague and even his spouse, but fails to position himself, indicating a taken-for-granted identity that he considers the standard and the norm. His answer was in response to the question: “How have diversity issues personally impacted you?”

I have one collaborator who is a black man. He came from, [he is] originally from Togo, you know Togo is near Ghana and he came over to Canada first and is now a faculty member in, I believe \_\_\_\_\_. He moved a couple of times around so I don't know, I lost track of him...*He's very smart* and he's a computer scientist *so we worked together well.... So I have some*

*experience with people from different backgrounds, and my wife.* So I know a little bit of the Korean community, or the Asian community, through that.

This study participant points to his collaboration with a Togolese colleague and his marriage to a Korean woman as the means through which diversity has personally impacted his life. This individual does not locate himself in the conversation, and in doing so, points to the difference between himself and others implying the normative nature of his racial and cultural identities. This discourse stands in particular contrast to the next conceptualization of diversity.

#### Diversity is Embodied and has Material Consequences

Unlike the individuals who consider diversity work socio-political currency, for others diversity represents an embodied experience of living through difference as the following undergraduate student leader suggests:

I think diversity is defined as a *noun* a lot of times. I would define it more as a *verb*. Diversity is an action, it's a movement, it flows.... I define diversity as *living through differences*.

For voices coming from historically oppressed communities, diversity means living through the experience of being the individuals classified as “different.” Specifically this constellation of discourse represents a subject position of personally embodying diversity related issues in some way. The issues are deeply felt, and they *have* or *have had* grave material consequences for the subject. Often this category of discourse points, in an imperfect and sometimes problematic way, to the lived experience of historically marginalized persons through stories and experiences that research participants shared.

I have felt silenced, certainly in my graduate program. When I was working on my Ph.D., that was probably the most painful experience of my entire academic career. Knowing I couldn't say anything because I wanted that degree to get out. At some point you just sort of make that decision and I have never opened my dissertation since. Because it was not a good

experience and I have seven of them in my closet. You know you're supposed to give your committee member each a copy; I did not. They don't know how I felt, I think they were all *good* people in many ways but when you have somebody tell you after you've passed your orals, your comprehensive exams, 'I'm surprised you did so well,' you know those kinds of things are really damning...And you don't know whether it's because you're a woman, a Mexican or all of those things but even if your committee didn't have faith you were going to do well, that paralyzes you in some way...Yeah, but you know it toughened me up...[because] as a professional you go through this all your life. You're a marginalized person, so I guess I *could be a victim and I could have acted that way*, but I did not. I said no, I'm going to get my degree and I'm going to go on and do the work that I was meant to do on this earth.

For this Chicana administrator, living through diversity culminated in devoting her professional work to issues of equity and inclusion.

Thus the launch pad to diversity issues in this subject position is an experiential connection to issues of difference through lived experience. It is deeply felt and bound up in the subject's identity. This idea is reflected in the comment below from another Chicana administrator:

I think to answer that *I would probably have to look at the way that I define the word diversity and whether or not the university is on the same page*. My concern is that the true importance of what diversity is, is sometimes used as a word when the university cannot define what it is. So it's like a catchall word for the university and I take personal issue to that because there's so much involved and so much heart in diversity and emotion and passion and anger.

The passion that stems from the excerpt above is multi-pronged but mostly it implies that the nature of diversity issues is complex and the emotions involved are strong. Many subjects in this position

commented on the importance of individual cultural identities and the need to combat attempts to erase them as the following interviewee suggests.

So I just think that identity is critical and what I worry about when we enter into these discussions about what should *we* be called, we play into an assimilationist model. Because then administrators start saying let's just treat everybody the same. Let's just go on to this color blind thing and you and I know it's not true.

A crucial part of this discourse then, is not only embodied experiences but a desire to recognize those experiences and the material conditions therein. It is a subject position wherein the subject's primary goal is to be recognized, known, and perhaps even understood.

#### Diversity Requires Collective Advocacy for Change

This constellation of discourse reflects a standpoint that suggests that the 21<sup>st</sup> century context calls for an understanding of shifting social boundaries and change in general. It suggests that diversity is not only a good thing or the right thing to think about or study, but rather an organizing construct that is the bedrock of healthy and vibrant communities. Diversity is an “opportunity” to be successful in a new social context rife with difference and the emerging understanding that institutions that desire success must actively strive for inclusion and equity. The following speaker highlights this point:

So it is about seeing difference as an asset, it is about saying, recognizing that the world is extraordinarily complex and we will only be in a position to contribute to the future of a healthy world if we're able to understand, value and negotiate difference and so forth without regard for placing differences within some kind of hierarchical structure. So in that sense, difference is the world. Diversity is the world.... So in that sense we have to advance an idea that diversity is an asset, diversity is again that difference. And we talk about different

knowledge, different epistemologies, different ontologies, different ways of existing and if we can appreciate and foster and garner respect for that then we can make our contributions. Rather than simply calling for pluralism and variety, the Chicano administrator above acknowledges hierarchies and structures. This positionality affirms that inequality is a part of the present social structure and institutions must actively work to undo those inequities. This subject position includes a moral call. Below, an administrator of color advocates for socially conscious action that engenders a spiritual response to the human experience in relation to difference, equity and justice.

Well to me, you know, I'd say that diversity again if I keep in mind the connection to equity, diversity is a way of being in the world that recognizes that social difference is constructed, that there are, [that] *people have unique ways of living, seeing, being*—and I mean being in the most spiritual sense—in the world and in that sense diversity is to advocate for knowledge of and respect for all those differences.

Individuals speaking from this space express ideas surrounding how institutions and structures need to be changed to ensure the ongoing success of the nation. As shown by the Chicano speaker below, they often say it takes concerted effort, collaboration, and action.

Well I would say that in order to be successful *we* all need to be part of the strategy to address the issues at hand. That that's how we should measure our success... *We* each have to take a real personal and professional look at *our* roles in terms of, the units that we represent, or the departments... Success will be dependent on how well *we* work with each other through collaboration and coordination of all *our* efforts.

Thus the emphasis is on working together.

Beyond this, study participants also articulate the idea that socially responsive diversity initiatives require a deep understanding of ones own positionality, which allows one to understand the cultural spaces that others come from. Unlike the subject positions produced in the other

conceptualizations of diversity, individuals mobilizing this discourse had a strong sense of personal connection to the issues, in addition to looking forward to, and actively working toward socio-structural change. It is also a standpoint that says “look inward to understand and change the outward.” This discursive constellation represents a subject position that advocates sober consideration of the social location of individual identities and the ramifications of identity positions in coloring ones understanding of the world and interactions in the world. Importantly, it is predominantly people of color speaking from this particular space. The following exemplar from a Black faculty member illustrates this subject position:

I would encourage them [people in general] to engage in the practice of truth telling, make an honest evaluation of where you are and who you are. Because when you do that you can look at someone else and...[you're] more understanding of the walk that they walk. If you know who you are, you know where you come from and you know how you've arrived, how could you not appreciate someone else's story? But if you don't know and if you don't value that, then you have no value for someone else's experiences and background and makeup. So as the kids would say 'Keep it real,' but I call it engaging in the practice of truth telling.

Some subjects even advanced the idea of *contextual efficacy*, privileging social justice. These subjects highlighted contextual issues that necessitate diversity initiatives and programs firmly grounded in equity and fairness. In particular, voices in this strand of discourse desire to see programs that respond to *evident* inequities in a system. Individuals in this standpoint advocated for minority hiring programs and ethnic centers on university campuses, for example, as necessary responses to ongoing historical inequities as the following comment suggests:

It's interesting to me how institutions have moved away from terms like *social justice* and *equity* because I think they're seen as too political...but in fact *that is how these programs began*. And I thought it was important *we* reclaim that language. So it's not just about diversity, it's also the

Office of Equity and Diversity. And so we want to make sure that people understand they interact, they intersect. And you can't talk about diversity without talking about equity and social justice. And social justice is one of our driving principles... Now where I get concerned about words like diversity, [is when] people will start talking about geographical diversity, intellectual diversity and yes that's true, but that's part and parcel of it. I don't go there. You know I don't have those arguments because I will tell people, 'You're just not wanting to deal with the issues at hand here.' And so *I am no longer interested in winning people's hearts*. It doesn't work for whatever reason.... Because as we know there's a general decline in the White population in terms of high school graduates but minority students are coming up in numbers. Unfortunately there's a high dropout rate in the school systems, you know high school, they're not graduating from high school, so if they don't graduate, who are going to keep these institutions of higher education alive and our research going in some really wonderful ways?

What separates this strand of discourse from the others is the focus on context and histories of inequity as the excerpt above from a Chicano administrator suggests. It moves beyond extreme pluralism, analyzing institutional constraints, or living diversity to emphasize particularly problematic histories of inequity with contemporary consequences. So while the idea that diversity is a crucial element of growing and vibrant communities is advanced, the comments suggest that the health of those communities is grounded in addressing the institutional and historical inequities that delimit the success of some communities. The following comment illustrates this point.

We do prioritize and we're very concerned because we link the word diversity to the issue of equity and we think that often times diversity can be such a catch word its kind of like the term multiculturalism over the years people...its sort of this feel good term that says we're all one and equal and it presumes kind of equality with everything that in some cases often

times it erases difference rather than recognizes difference.... So for us diversity and equity have to go hand-in-hand, and we have to have a historical consciousness about inequities. And so in the instance of higher education that has become most manifest in terms of race and ethnicity and in terms of systematic exclusion from these institutions over the last few centuries...When we say diversity we don't like to think of it in a simple multicultural framework as just all you have to do is all get along and not recognize the power differences in society that become manifest in the university.

As this comment suggests, this discourse emphasizes the recognition of histories of inequity—recognizing groups that are marginalized and disenfranchised and taking action to correct those impediments to their success. Instead of a general emphasis on taking action to celebrate and include representatives of various groups, study participants speaking from this standpoint believe that immediate action should be taken to address the needs of communities with a history of disenfranchisement. The following is an exemplar from a graduate student leader of color.

*Well, I deal with the administration all the time and they certainly don't see my perspective on diversity. You brought up a moment ago that some people don't agree that there isn't diversity, but when you are in a state where 43% of the population is Hispanic, and less than 10% of professors are Hispanic, there's a real parity issue here.*

Study participants who espoused these ideas demonstrated that they value multiple forms of difference, however, this strand of the discourse favors and in fact, agitates for understanding of and responses to histories of inequity. These individuals call for going through an institution piece by piece and addressing issues that hinder the success of particular communities who may have a history of disenfranchisement in institutional contexts. It is the strong emphasis on contextual inequities that move detractors to critique policies and procedures as “contentious,” “unfair” and “divisive” according to its detractors. These voices also recognized intersecting identifications and

noted that women of color need additional resources, for example, because they experience additional types of inequity that other women do not experience. Others in this subject position said internationalizing a campus is a form of diversity, but money should be spent on domestic forms of diversity in light of the high attrition rates of native born students of color in comparison to international students, for example.

More specifically, the following comments from a “multiethnic, multicultural, half Asian, and half White” interviewee captures the core arguments:

Diversity should mean that everyone has an equal opportunity, but then again, having worked in education for a long time, I know that’s not true. I think diversity for me means giving people the support and the resources they need to succeed that are fairly distributed among people of different backgrounds based on their needs. And I think that the needs of different groups are different. So I think that diversity for me has changed from kind of being this, well, we are the world, everyone should just be treated equally, to a more *nuanced* stance of well everyone’s different, we should embrace that and give people opportunities to be successful and live fruitful lives however they see fit.

This excerpt shows how this strand of discourse operationalizes the idea of taking action to address power differences, equity and parity. In short it does so by calling for efforts that take actions relevant to specific group needs. This subject position doesn’t just call for building and growing a vibrant community with diversity as a foundation, but suggests that contemporary inequities inhibit this type of social action. Indeed it suggests that useful action requires recognizing context, and singling out particular groups for specific types of treatment that combat and reverse the ramifications of historical marginalization. In this way it emphasizes the ideas of institutional and social success and growth through diversity, but does so by calling for social action that promotes equity.

### Conclusion: Looking Across the Discourses

To conclude this chapter, I look across the different conceptualizations of diversity to consider some of the implications of the different discourses. To do this I offer closing thoughts on the discourses, compare and contrast them and begin the process of considering the larger socio-cultural issues at work. For example, *extreme pluralism*, the first conceptualization of diversity fosters the notion that issues of difference are “pure and simple.” The study participants who spoke from this space voiced ideas reflecting the notion that more difference *is* diversity. Sometimes speakers even privileged international diversity since other forms of difference are “basic.” The key discursive strategy used to center international diversity was to describe a binary: (1) the domestic and White individuals as “us”; and (2) international students or those of another race as “them.” This discursive construction of socio-cultural interactions was reflected in multiple interview comments and reflects the perspective of those mobilizing this discourse, and also their assumptions of how social interactions between themselves and others should unfold in the context of a diverse university and society.

Those mobilizing this discourse were predominantly White. Even when interviewees expressed a marginalized positionality such as socio-economic status for example, their experience still implied institutional and socio-cultural privileges grounded in their majority status and their privileged position in a society with whiteness serving as its ideological framework (Martin & Nakayama, 1991). This is evident in the ways these individuals discursively constructed international and racial difference as needing to be “understood,” the way they created an “us” and “them” (White and international or racially different), and in how they treated differences as “basic.”

Another crucial note is that these subjects generally did not name their status or their privileges. As Althusser (2001) would suggest, this speaks to their interpellation in an ideological framework that is invisible to them by virtue of their embeddedness in it; invariably this framework

still holds material consequences for persons excluded by virtue of their subject position. This is also reflected by Krizek and Nakayama (1995) who discuss the ramifications of the invisibility of whiteness and its mobilization as a strategic rhetoric that “continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain” (p. 291). Finally the call for extreme pluralism reflects individualism and dilutes the importance of racism, and the oppression of some groups (Johnson, 2001).

Study participants speaking from the *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* approach to diversity generally described their positive intentions and those of their colleagues. The description of intentions is situated in tensions between what the speakers try to do and actions they are *expected* to take. These sentiments were expressed by leaders charged with actualizing diversity initiatives. While many participants spoke from this position, generally White males in positions of leadership seemed to mobilize this discourse more than others. Entrenched in the contemplative and reflexive nature of the discourse are the stirrings of using talk of constrained agency in a strategic way that holds up “standard operating procedures,” concern with creating “imbalances” and “lowering standards” as the dominant reasons for limited change. Rather than addressing the socio-cultural issues that breed such a context and the contributions they can make to address those issues, these interviewees tended to construct a discourse focusing on how their intentions and options are constrained.

These speakers offer no specific definition of diversity, instead they generally take a different position from the pluralistic approach to talk about the difficulties of achieving a diverse department, program or student population. The circuitous nature of the discourse is revealed in the apparent desire for change juxtaposed with constant references to the challenges bracketing change. The speakers make an effort to understand what diversity means to their particular programs and departments; the weakness, however, is that this standpoint stays at the philosophizing and thinking

level while also questioning diversity initiatives and blaming the institution and the context for limited progress. It is the analyzing and accounts of constraints that this subject position advances that make it unique.

Some subjects espousing the ideas found in the *diversity “work” offers socio-political currency* standpoint spoke of their desire for recognition for their diversity work. The focus has a strong individualistic edge that privileges the personal research “work” that the subjects are doing in the area of diversity. Some voices in this category said that the efforts they are making should be respected, “recognized” and applauded. Study participants speaking from this space described some form of critical awareness of issues of power and privilege. However the strong individualistic edge that this discourse takes tends to center those in this subject position. It is almost as if these subjects are asking for special recognition because they have worked or lived with individuals from other nations or they “get it.” The majority status of individuals speaking from this standpoint affords them the additional privilege to: (1) choose the rules of engagement; and (2) decide when and with whom to talk about their work. This level of distance separates these subjects from those who have lived experiences with issues of diversity for example.

The hallmark of the *diversity is embodied and has material consequences* subject position is the idea of lived experiences with difference, and the social issues engendered by a diverse society. It represents survival within a social context that may have problematized an individual in some way as a result of some perceived difference. Interview data suggests that persons expressing such an understanding of diversity feel very strongly about diversity related issues; it isn’t a “project” to them or simply a “good idea” as the *diversity “work” offers socio-political currency* individuals tended to voice; the embodied nature of the experience raises the stakes for these subjects. It is easy to see how a person embroiled in this subject position may collide forcefully with an individual speaking from a

position steeped in institutional constraints or ones who call for recognition of their work in the area of diversity.

The last diversity standpoint is the standpoint calling for social justice. It reflects a recent wave in the movement for social justice in higher education that the continuing evolution of words like diversity are capturing. Williams, Berger, and McClendon (2005) suggest that a vital mission is for higher education institutions to live up to the mandate of a democratic society where all persons are equally positioned to succeed and are equally included in society; the *diversity requires collective advocacy for change* standpoint captures this perspective. More than others, speakers using this strand of discourse espoused the idea that diversity is a good thing to the extent that it moves beyond institutional lip-service to address inequity. Persons in this standpoint expressed a negative opinion of the idea of diversity when it is operationalized as extreme pluralism, and/or what one interviewee called a “public relations campaign” that misses the mark in addressing the real issues of inequity at hand. For these individuals, the word diversity itself is a problematic label and perhaps even a camouflage for the “greater issue[s]” as one study participant suggests. From reading the comments of those in this standpoint, it is evident that these greater issues include: (1) valuing humanity and the contributions of all persons; (2) recognizing the force of history in creating present day inequities; and (3) removing barriers to the success of the historically disenfranchised in the U.S. context. These voices stand in clear opposition to the extreme pluralism standpoint. In line with Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, and Bartee (2005), these individuals suggest that having a “diverse” student body does not necessarily make for equitable educational outcomes; rather a truly diverse university ensures that all students are capable of achieving equal measures of success.

Thus these five categories of discourse reflect particular subject positions and orientations to what diversity is and what diversity work should do. As these constellations of discourse emerged, I found myself categorizing particular moments in my own professional and personal experiences

where I spoke and acted from several of these subject positions depending on the specific context (audience, issue at hand and/or organization for example). This represents the challenges endemic to defining diversity and to operationalizing it.

The discourses and the subject positions implicated therein point to the complexity of this dynamic and shifting social construct. They point to the notion by scholars like Jackson, Shin, and Wilson (2000) who assert that the politics of identity will be the “greatest problem” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (p. 82). Implicated in the different subject positions are issues of standpoint and invariably, issues of identity that affect the social relations between individuals and groups (Collier, 2005). As the identity politics reflected in the discourses of diversity speak to the complicated nature of the current social context, the discursive struggle they also imply is another crucial reflection of the evolving social dynamics that warrant a study of this nature. These multiply occurring discourses of diversity reflect the Derridian notion as described in Ashe et al. (1999) that “there cannot be a universal language” that is “applicable across all contexts” for language is never “closed” nor is it a “monolithic structure” that remains constant (p. 62). Additionally this flux is reflective of how individuals are positioned and position themselves differently. It is for this reason that subject positions (both avowed and ascribed), and standpoint theory (Hartsock, 1998) are so crucial to understanding the discursive construction of different understandings of diversity and how those understandings impact and contribute to social processes like institutional policies and social practices. Despite this ebb and flow however, the discursive constellations that emerged in the data are noteworthy categories that construct particular subject positions and implicate ideologies regarding the definition and practice of diversity and its attendant issues like equity, and the representation and access of persons and groups in this crucial moment in U.S. history.

## CHAPTER 5: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PRACTICES

This chapter answers research question two: How are historical and contemporary social practices evident in interview discourses? The interview transcripts reveal perspectives of historical and contemporary social practices through an institutional lens. Particularly, interviewees highlighted institutional practices as reflections of and responses to historical and contemporary social practice. So rather than discussing historical and contemporary social practices as stand-alone issues, study participants introduced these issues through the institutional practices they discussed and the issues therein. In addition to pointing to particular standpoints, the key issues interviewees raised in this regard illustrate why some institutional practices in higher education are successful and why others are not in the context of diversity related efforts. In the following chapter, I present these key issues, the discourses they are grounded in and how they point to social practices through the lens of institutional practice.

### Critique of Practices that Reinforce Ongoing Inequities

One set of institutional practices that emerged linked historical and contemporary issues by pointing to ongoing inequities. In particular, the interviews suggest that ongoing inequities affect how diversity is actualized programmatically and in institutional policies in much the same ways as the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s led to ethnic studies programs and opened the door for considering historically underrepresented persons in U.S. higher education for example (Gutierrez, 1994). Indeed the current trends reflect the ongoing evolution of the multiculturalism and diversity movement mapped out in chapter two. For example study participants with a variety of standpoints cited the existence of ethnic centers as crucial to underrepresented students of color; this was cited on numerous occasions as an effective contemporary institutional practice for addressing the high attrition rates of students of color in U.S. higher education. The trend towards cultural centers is a manifestation of the ongoing campaign for equity and the inclusion of the

underrepresented in higher education. They are also the clearest evidence that while the conversation continues to evolve as multiply occurring discourses of diversity suggest, the goal is still the same: equity and the removal of barriers to the success of historically marginalized persons (Thomas, 1997). The following interview excerpt from a White undergraduate student leader reflects this perspective:

I have a brother who just moved out here so he still holds very true to the New Hampshire idea of ethnicity which is white. He doesn't have an idea of diversity. He looks at it as those ethnic centers divide who we are. Because I'm white I don't connect with anybody from El Centro and El Centro actually...[enables]...Mexicans and Hispanics to be in a different place on campus than they would. He says that if you dissolved those institutions they would be forced to acclimate into the student union building right here or with all different ethnicities. My argument is we have so much diversity on campus that we are going to have students that are first time college, first generation, don't speak English very well and need a place that makes them feel comfortable. Our dropout rate is ridiculous on this campus... I don't know the percentages or anything, but I know that if we got rid of those ethnic centers... it would increase because people would not feel comfortable on their own campus.

The prominence of interview data that points to ongoing inequities is also reflected in the *Diversity requires collective advocacy for change* discourse. In fact different participants suggested that action must be taken to ensure the success of historically marginalized communities through social practice in much the same ways as proponents of earlier social movements (Gutierrez, 1994). The following exemplar from a Hispanic administrator who has long served in higher education paints a compelling picture of some of these institutional historical and contemporary social practices:

Interviewee: Well affirmative action was big when I started my profession and unfortunately universities were forced to diversify and diversity wasn't a term that was used. But I was placed in a position because the government was doing an audit of a university in Texas and they told the administrators, you've got to diversify. And you need more people of color in staff and in the faculty. If you are to accept federal money, you have to do certain things. And so I just happened to be around and they said would you consider this position, and uhm, this is the pay, and we'd like for you to consider this. And I said fine, of course. And then later on I found out it was because they were forced to diversify their staff. That was a break for me. And then I think I became assistant to the vice president because they also needed to diversify their staff. So there's been some breaks there. It's not because I was really smart.

Hannah: I'm sure you are very smart.

Interviewee: But there were other people that probably could have filled that position, but they wanted to diversify. I happened to be at the right time and the right place. And then I became interim president because they needed a minority in that position.

As this interview excerpt suggests, practices like affirmative action emerged from a call for compensating for past discrimination which dates back to the early days of the civil rights movement (Thomas, 1997). A new development is that in areas like New Mexico, conversations and policy negotiations regarding who "counts" as a minority in the current socio-cultural context are being held. The following comment from a White department chair is a response to the question: "When if ever have you felt misunderstood?"

Maybe, perhaps, over interpretations about what constitutes a bona fide minority. Seriously.

So one simple example is a Mexican citizen pursuing an undergraduate degree in the United

States who wants to go to graduate school. Are they considered a minority? I know what \_\_\_\_\_ in the College of \_\_\_\_\_ would say.

On the one hand, these conversations reflect the progress that has been made in ensuring the success of historically underrepresented groups in U.S. higher education, yet because of this progress, some voices are now asking, “Who is still considered a ‘minority?’ This is due to the paradox of progress for some, in the midst of ongoing inequities. These types of conversations have led to competition among different marginalized groups as discussions rage on regarding scarce resources. The comment below from a Black administrator speaks to this unfolding conversation:

Because you’ve set up a ladder and you have several rungs on a ladder and you have someone at the top of that ladder and you have all the minorities fighting for the lowest rung and that’s what happens. We’re naïve to believe that African Americans and Hispanics and Natives aren’t competing, but they’re all competing for the lowest rung and that’s unfortunate. But that’s society, that’s nationwide, that’s the thing we’re dealing with.

In education for example, it may manifest in the form of competition among ethnic centers that to begin with, are often under-funded, constantly face the possibility of losing programs or are in jeopardy of being consolidated or cut altogether. This too points to and reflects historical and contemporary social practices.

In the 1970s, the desire for group recognition and individual group rights led to the explosion of professional associations like the National Council of Black Studies, the National Association of Chicano Studies, and the Association for Asian American Studies (Gutierrez, 1994). Therefore while much has changed, the contemporary issues cited by participants point to this ongoing struggle for the recognition of individual group needs of underrepresented communities in U.S. higher education. The following statement, spoken from a position of embodied experiences with diversity reflects the need to recognize group needs and the need to avoid being subsumed by a

general discourse on inequity. The comments show the importance of historical events contributing to contemporary social practice and the positioning of ethnic groups in the discussion on the allocation of resources for example. The following response from an African American graduate student illuminates this point.

I think we can be big in numbers. I guess we just can't lose sight of individual challenges; especially with African American students it's a sense of urgency. There's this sense of urgency and where I can appreciate, yeah, we're all minorities, our struggle is very different than Latino students, than Native American students, Asian students; it's a very different walk.

These types of comments reflect ongoing inequities; individuals continue pushing back against the barriers to success within communities they ascribe to, breeding competition. This competition has created a space where programs that address the needs of the marginalized cannot in many instances work together because they must avoid losing sight of the "specific" needs of the groups involved as evidenced in the narrative above. The social practice of separating to avoid the flattening of group needs has been useful, yet some suggest that it is also a major source of disunity. Despite this however, the implementation of initiatives that address the needs of historically oppressed groups are encouraged in some contexts more than others.

Unfortunately for...this office which primarily works with African American students, I think the University of New Mexico still focuses on the concept of tricultural, just like the state of New Mexico. I don't think that we're at a point where it's a multicultural atmosphere yet. So what does that mean? As long as these particular groups are involved in our diversity plan, whatever that might be, that we have accomplished our strategic plan for diversity. I don't think there's enough inclusion of African Americans. I don't think there's enough

inclusion of Asians. I don't think there's enough inclusion of other races. Again, [its] between Anglo, Hispanic and Native...

This Black administrator is responding to the demographic composition of New Mexico and the designation of the University of New Mexico as a Hispanic serving institution. This administrator suggests that this designation ensures that the Hispanic, Latino/a and Chicano/a communities are at the forefront of diversity conversations and funding at this institution, and given the significant American Indian population in New Mexico, this community is also centered in conversations around diversity. This practice of highlighting the needs of particular communities reflects how the state and institutional demographic context dictates how diversity issues and particular groups are positioned and how resources are allocated.

#### Critique of Practices that Reify the Status Quo:

##### “Default White Setting”

The views of institutional and social practices that emerged through the interviews also reflect a critique of practices that maintain the status quo. Interviewees suggest that these practices affect the types of policies and programs that are encouraged, allowed and ultimately enforced in institutions. The following statement from a Latin American graduate student leader with indigenous Hispanic, European, and African roots illuminates this hesitation towards systemic change from some subjects:

I think they've kind of accepted that diversity is okay as long as the status quo is maintained. By that I mean they bought into [the idea that] its okay to have people of different backgrounds as long as they accept the American culture, whatever that means, which in my mind, is the *default white setting*. As long as you fit in with that, you can be any color you want to be. And that doesn't quite work for everybody. Some people don't want to let go of their culture to embrace what can arguably be called a culture.

This hesitation to change the status quo on the part of dominant voices is also evident in the *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* diversity discourse described earlier which emphasizes the difficulties of making changes in policies, procedures or practices. By speaking of the limitations to change, the possibilities for action are minimized and the established structure is maintained.

Participants speaking from this subject position stay at the thinking about diversity stage, while their discourse enables the status quo to continue

Another crucial part of the critique of the status quo is the pressure to demonstrate positive outcomes from diversity initiatives. This emphasis inhibits the creation of policies that could radically change the status quo as evidenced by the following critique from a Chicana administrator:

Personally I feel that President \_\_\_\_\_ said “Ok, I’m going to fill this position [equity and inclusion staff person], but it’s up to [diversity administrator] to outline this’ and I don’t think it’s fair. I think it’s a setup. So if it fails based on lack of homework, his [president’s] reaction is going to be, ‘Well, I tried’ but they don’t get it. My fear is going to be that if [the diversity administrator] shows him a negative report card that his reaction is going to be ‘No, I don’t want to see negative, I want to see positive.’ It doesn’t work because I feel diversity in itself must be a challenged issue constantly.

In essence, this category of diversity discourse reflects organizational practices that are band-aids for deep structural inequities requiring a more systemic approach. This is reflected in the high number of department chairs who cited limited funding as the greatest impediment to recruiting and retaining faculty of color for example. This external focus takes the gaze off departmental socio-structural issues that may inhibit the recruitment of these colleagues or may work against their success when they are hired. In this way, the larger institution is critiqued while departmental contributions to this larger structure are not considered, thereby maintaining the status quo. One Black, African American study participant critically analyzed the whole diversity movement as a

manifestation of maintaining the status quo yet portraying the idea that one is working towards change in the following statement:

Diversity is what I call a racial project, right? It's created to address an issue but we don't look at the issue. So when I look at this I would say diversity has been a mechanism to either advance or diminish one's skills and opportunities at the university. That's how I would say I've experienced this whole diversity campaign....[look] at deeper issues and how power and privilege are exercised under this veil of white supremacy on college campuses in the United States. So I could look at it and rest on it [diversity], or I could look to a greater issue. What exists that creates this need for diversity as a campaign and as a promotion. And for me it's that higher education is the last bastion of separate but equal. There are still a lot of battles to be waged beyond what exists in diversity.

This is an insightful statement that calls into question the efficacy of the “diversity campaign” according to this faculty member. It calls into question whether this “public relations campaign” and the practices it encourages are responding to the broader social context—lack of equity, issues of power, privilege, and white supremacy. A Chicana administrator expressed her views about this campaign as follows:

Interviewee: How do you know we're promoting diversity? How do you know that it is working here on campus other than pulling out brochures and putting Mariachis in front and saying this is the Latino culture here on campus. Really?

Hannah: How do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Oh, I am livid and in all conversations my reaction is, 'Let's use that word of the year, thoughtful.' You just clumped the entire eight thousand plus Latinos into wearing sombreros and playing the guitar. You don't know who we are. This is terrible, but that's all they have. And this is marketing.

This interviewee spoke at length about the types of change that she feels are allowable at her particular institution. She suggested that the emphasis on ethnic celebrations, for example, minimizes within-group variations and the nuances of different cultural identities, while advancing the image of a critically engaged institution. This interviewee earlier spoke of the president of this institution desiring a positive “report card” on diversity. Both of these issues speak to upper administrators’ lack of understanding of “real” or lived diversity issues from the respondent’s standpoint.

Therefore, the standpoint of *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* deals with historical and social issues by staying at the thinking stages and by philosophizing about diversity issues. As interviewees critiquing the status quo suggested, this move reflects a reluctance to address structural change. It allows subjects speaking from positions of privilege who are also grounded in the thinking stages to point to their intentions, while the established structure doesn’t actually change. Individuals with privilege often don’t name that privilege, nor do they acknowledge that the status quo benefits them (Johnson, 2001). It is a taken for granted positionality that is problematic because it isn’t responsive to larger social structures. It would be expected therefore that marginalized persons—generally racial minorities—tended to critique the reluctance to address structural change and critiqued the “public relations campaign” around diversity. Conversely the interviewee voices speaking from privileged locations such as White administrators often made comments like, “We’re doing the best we can” as one interviewee suggested. While both marginalized and privileged voices described the need to address social and historical issues, the descriptions reflected their diverse standpoints. This illuminates the challenges of a society still grappling with the historical legacy of social inequities.

The critique of the status quo and the default white setting is a call to uncover the workings of whiteness and racism in institutions of higher learning and beyond. This call is reflected in J.

Blaine Hudson's (2002) analysis of the experience of people of color in the U.S. Hudson (2002) makes the key argument that "having invented itself as a 'racial state,' [America] chose to remain a 'racial state' through the establishment of a racial covenant creating a community of people living under "fourth world conditions" (p. 148-149). In his analysis, Hudson is quick to assert that this covenant is not maintained by malicious intent, but rather the operations of the covenant are "justified as being 'right' by the 'received wisdom' of cultural racism and the simple fact that long-held privileges can become confused with rights" (p. 160). The preoccupation with privileges that are confused with rights obscures the exclusionary nature of those privileges, even as it maintains the operation of hierarchies between the haves and have nots, the influential and those with less influence, and the discursively White--unquestioningly American--and the discursively other--marginally American.

Hudson reinforces this argument through the mobilization of the 1993 and 1994 Human Development Index published by the United Nations that creates a "quality of life" rating for each nation based on economic conditions and educational attainment trends among others. The U.S. is ranked between fifth and seventh. Yet:

When disaggregated by race, white Americans, if treated as a separate 'nation' enjoyed by far the highest standard of living in the world. At the same time and in the same nation, African Americans and Latinos, if treated as separate 'nations' ranked thirty-first and thirty-fifth respectively. As a standard comparison, the small Caribbean nation of Barbados, a former British Sugar colony, ranked twentieth. Thus viewed from a global perspective, the United States is actually three or more racially defined and dramatically unequal 'nations' under one government—all but one of which exists under conditions often found only in the developing world. (Hudson, 2002, p. 150)

It is these challenges that propel his use of the phrase “fourth world group” to denotatively and connotatively capture the historical and contemporary experience of marginalized racial minorities in U.S. society.

Omi and Winant (2004) in their exploration of the idea of race and nation, assert that the struggles that a critique like Hudson’s (2002) exposes are related to a “racial dictatorship” that has ideologically linked *structure* and *representation*, with *racial projects* doing the ideological work. They argue that “a racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (p. 125). Since the establishment of the non-European other in the early years of nation building, they posit that the U.S. has been embedded in one racial project after another setting the boundaries of citizenship, power and success. In fact they assert that understanding the pervasive nature of racial projects in U.S. society will “facilitate the understanding of a whole range of contemporary controversies and dilemma’s involving race...and the relationship of race to other forms of differences, inequalities, and oppressions...” (p. 124). It is evident that the current controversies and issues surrounding diversity that are described by interviewees are a manifestation of this dynamic. The lack of willingness to engage in structural change points to an established order that privileges some groups at the expense of others. The interview comments about diversity as a racial project suggest that race epitomizes one crucial dimension in that complex equation of difference, rights, privileges and structure. They demonstrate how long-standing privileges are now confused with rights that affect social practices and the interactions between groups (Hudson, 2002).

#### Critique of Assimilationist Practices

The critique of assimilation emerged as a counter discourse to the *extreme pluralism* diversity discourse. A call for pluralism avows and celebrates difference yet in many regards dilutes the differences and expects those who are different to be weaved into the mainstream flow and to “fit

in.” The following interview narrative problematizes the demand to fit in and the consequences of doing so:

Interviewee: Forgive me for bringing this up, but Native Americans, and we have Native American students who go to our department, not many of them. I’ve had a couple who’ve worked on their thesis with me, and you know they voice these issues... [saying]... ‘this is kind of an uneasy thing for us to be doing because many members of our family look at us in a very different way. And not in a positive way.’ Now that’s not always the case. But that shouldn’t be either.

Hannah: Have they ever told you why?

Interviewee: It’s just mainly culture. You are mixing with the white man. You want to get a job in \_\_\_\_\_ and say for example work for Shell Oil in Houston. You’re going to be mixing with the white man. And if you work for Shell or if you work for Exxon Mobile, there’s literally posters in the hallway telling you who you must vote for. Or else.

Hannah: Is that true?

Interviewee: Yes.

This example is reflective of social discourses that problematize cultural concerns. While negative family reactions were critiqued, the expectation for Native Americans to adapt and “fit into the system” illustrates how the marginalized may be expected to give up family support to be successful. Assimilation requires that some identities are then subjugated, in this conversation a Native American identity, to encourage the academic or corporate success of the marginalized individual. In this way discourse from subjects offering this critique questioned what one study participant called a “default” mainstream ideology that privileges doing what is expected as defined by the academic institution or corporation.

The interview transcripts revealed that while subjects speaking from the *extreme pluralism* standpoint favored a variety of differences, they did not address cultural variations that affect how people participate in institutions and why. The comment from the faculty member above shows that Native American students are expected to do the adjusting. These comments reveal that there is a dominant narrative that “symbolically” annihilates those who cannot be “integrated within a predictable narrative” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 183). This “predictable narrative” also lends to organizational practices that emphasize celebration, essentialized images and superficial inclusion. Predictably the interview transcripts reveal that the discourse of subjects critiquing assimilation clashes strongly with comments from subjects praising pluralism. The following comment from a Black administrator illuminates a crucial element in the critique of assimilationist practices:

The message just needs to be that we’re here, we’re here to stay and we want to contribute like everyone else, so give us that opportunity.... No one has asked us. We want to be asked, to be brought to the table...

This interviewee expressed his frustration with the paradox of being included, as *extreme pluralism* advocates, yet still feeling “irrelevant” and uninvited to “the table.” He spoke of being in the university as an “African American voice,” yet being silenced in relation to other issues. This comment captures the idea of the “diversity campaign” where particular voices are included in superficial ways. The paradox is that while the voices are assimilated, they are not allowed to be heard in such a way that they can contribute to an agenda for change or affect the structure of the institution. This is interesting because this respondent spoke often of not having his perspective, which stems from his positionality, included in the larger institutional context. Instead he discussed how his program is kept within a pocket of the university wherein it can be included and assimilated to a point, while it does not alter the dominant narrative of the institution. This administrator’s comments highlight how a hesitation to change the status quo works hand-in-hand with assimilation

to maintain established structures. His comments reflect a critique of superficial inclusion, wherein the under-represented are woven into the “assumed universal values identified historically with the dominant European American culture” that some still hold up as the standard (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 183). Instead he voices a call to have perspectives, positionalities, and voices heard to a point where those contributions can interrupt what Rodriguez (2009) calls a “predictable narrative.” It is a strong call to have one’s positionality become embedded in the life of an institution in way that moves beyond superficial inclusion and mere assimilation.

The following comment by a Latin American further reveals the challenges of assimilation as discussed by a study participant.

Um, when I came to this country my parents told me that I needed to assimilate into the society. You know if they rub their bellies with blue paint, you rub your belly with blue paint. That comes from an author, not my parents. One of my favorite authors, Robert Heinlein. But so that was their tactic. What they didn’t get was, you can’t assimilate when one, you’ve got a culture that’s different from the one you’re trying to assimilate into, and, you don’t want to lose it. Also if you don’t look like or sound like everybody else, then it’s harder to assimilate into. You have to be accepted in order to be able to assimilate. And so I tried and somewhere along the line I decided I don’t want to try anymore. I wanted to be more like me which is one of the reasons I moved to Albuquerque because the culture here or the culture that’s left from the Hispanic community here is very similar to the culture that I loved in terms of how they think about family, how they think about people.

In this instance the study participant made a choice regarding his positionality that manifested in his choice of a geographic location. It signals a social context, a city, in which he feels comfortable, while also signaling the challenges of being accepted elsewhere. His description displays the social

practices that indicate assimilation and the personal consequences therein. This is the same student who further critiqued institutional practices based on what he called the “default...white setting.”

It is this particular issue that led to the emergence of research from scholars like Molefi Asante (2006) who challenge the “default white setting” by carving out space for other perspectives through their scholarship. Asante speaks of unhinging the generalization of the particular (here White identity) into the absolute (here whiteness ideology) thereby delimiting the full expression of other forms of knowledge and ways of being. This is reflected in the assimilationist position because according to Asante (2006), the quintessential example of this move is the mobilization of western thought as the absolute, and the foundation of knowledge, when it is in fact, particular. He argues that the strategic deployment of western thought as absolute in U.S. institutions of education erases the knowledge of African, Eastern and Native American communities for example. He further adds that “openness to human agency” should be the “operative principle” (p.146). In the article “Afrocentricity and the Eurocentric Hegemony of Knowledge,” he further argues that a fixation with color is not the problem with issues of race, and diversity, but rather the “strange belief on the part of whites that they are superior..., that they have a right to establish and maintain hierarchy...” (p. 152). So like many other scholars speaking from this tradition, Asante posits that the specificity of identities must be maintained to combat the forces of assimilation. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) makes a similar claim when she advances the importance of considering indigenous ways of knowing and being in the research process. Thus while the interview comments on assimilation and its effects emerge from within an institutional space, it is evident that they reflect and provide an orientation to larger social and historical issues of power, privilege, inclusion and agency in the U.S. higher education system and beyond.

Call for Practices that Recognize Intersecting Identities and Oppressions

The final constellation of ideas is a call rather than a critique. Intersecting identities and the idea of intersecting oppressions are referenced in a number of the different descriptions of institutional and social practices. In the last decade, these topics have affected research, legal practices (like the census for example), and the types of conversations taking place in education. For example one Chicana administrator working in the area of diversity said:

I believe identity is so important. I mean every year when I welcome new marginalized students to our university—I use marginalized you know as underrepresented students—I will say to them, ‘We have a responsibility as an institution not only to develop the academic skills that you have brought with you to our campus, but we also have a responsibility to develop all of your identities, whatever those are. And it’s not about preferencing one over the other.’

This call is reflected in the *diversity requires collective advocacy for change* standpoint which privileges community, unified social action, and the importance of multiple identities. The following statement from a Chicana administrator illuminates the movement away from binary thinking and towards intersection, and social efforts that cut across experiences.

I mean part of the misunderstanding is...many people who just see this issue in a black and white paradigm. So I have to often say, ‘you know that’s an important part of the paradigm...[but] it’s much broader than that. You can’t define everything in the context only of a black and white paradigm. There are multiple paradigms and it’s not that one is better than the other or more important than the other, and how do they all intersect.

As participants raised this issue, it was a strong call for more complexity on diversity issues. Invariably this call for complexity comes from a dynamically shifting social context that is also reflected in scholarship. Specifically scholars emerged in the 1990s who made “sense of the dynamic

potential implicit—for better or worse—in the tensions within persons and among the contending cultural discourses that locate persons” in order to challenge essentialism (Calhoun, 1994, p. 28).

One such effort to challenge essentialism has been the work of scholars like Patricia Hill Collins (2003) to locate a black feminist positionality and the intersectionality of race, class and gender as nested systems of oppression. In “Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection” (2003), she argues that there are “few pure victims or oppressors, and that each one of us derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression that frame our lives” (p. 591). In it she calls for a richer conceptualization of identity and positionality that resists both the flattening of difference and the “Olympics” of ranking oppressions to determine the biggest “victim.” Her work stands as an epistemic challenge to efforts to flatten difference and conceptualize difference solely on nationalistic or binary categories of black/white and male/female. Collins (2003) refers to difference and diversity as messy, historically bound and deeply multifaceted. Collins’ assertions are consistent with the interviewees’ comments from this position.

The comments of research participants are also consistent with critiques of academic institutions that have historically ignored difference and marginalized alternate forms of knowledge generation, and in so doing fostered exploitation of certain communities such as underrepresented groups in the research process for example. One such project is the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. In it she challenges the veracity of western research in exploring the life of indigenous people. She argues for a transformative research methodology that is sensitive to indigenous ways of knowing and being, and that reclaims these critical dimensions through the research process.

It is important to note that while a critical mass raised this issue of intersections, other interviewees suggest that there should be significant concern for specific group needs, actions, and

recognition. In fact some even argued that the inclusion of more “interests” into the diversity movement “waters down” the conversation as the following comment suggests:

So I think that terms that are edgy oftentimes, it's when they're somewhat successful that they become co-opted, you know and then you get people of different values using them so they have a multiplicity of meanings and then how they get enacted becomes watered down because it's no longer that critique from the margins. That's because it's become mainstream, it becomes centralized and...absorbed and therefore it's hard to know...If there's any ideology behind it, it's a really defused ideology. So I think diversity to some extent is following that same path and I don't know what's going to replace it.

This particular comment reflects a suspicion of the “diversity campaign” strategy mentioned earlier.

The comment above illustrates how organizational policies and practices implicated in particular words like “diversity” may come under suspicion due to discursive struggles between differently positioned subjects. I raise this point to show the consequences for diversity practices becoming mainstream and centered, and to alert readers to the fact that a “diversity movement” is not static nor easily defined. As it has been evolving since the civil rights movement of the 1960s and carried through changing labels like affirmative action, multiculturalism, and now diversity, the issues being raised will continue to challenge the accepted terminology in each historical moment (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, & Bartee, 2005; McLaren, 1994; Stam & Shohat, 1994; Stiehm, 1994; Wallace, 1994). For example the current talk of equity and inclusion that has been circulating over the course of the last few years reflects this ongoing evolution and raises the question of what will “replace” the word diversity given the shifting nature of the discourse.

### Conclusion

Overall the issues raised by participants in their descriptions of institutional and social practices can be understood through Wittgenstein's idea of language games, wherein he suggests that

language works according to rules as games do, determining the moves that can be made and the action allowed in the context of how language is utilized and understood (Ashe et. al, 1999). Citing Wittgenstein, Ashe et al. (1999) suggest that the “rules from one game are not applicable in any other – people playing different games with different rules cannot play with each other” (p. 55). It is no surprise, then, that struggles embedded in the language of the discourse continue to change the ‘rules’ for diversity practices and the historical and contemporary social practices they address. Given the struggle over competing norms and consequently, the moves that are permissible, there is tremendous room for misunderstanding and confusion about the social reality to which diversity *can* and *should* contribute. This process, as described by participants, creates division within the efforts, competing interests, co-option and discursive struggles that can foster organizational tensions and competition. These challenges implicate organizational practices that some research participants consider threatening (a diversity essay on college application packets for example), divisive (paying faculty of color more to recruit them), “watered down” (“diversity campaign”) or ineffective (hiring a diversity administrator and expecting a “positive report card” immediately) given the interest in working across differences and intersecting oppressions. Thus while some participants call for practices that lead to social change, others call for reflection. While some desire recognition of specific identities, others push for normalized standards that may marginalize groups with a divergent standpoint. While some favor intersections and working across differences, others are suspicious. Interview data suggests that discourses about contemporary and historical social practices within institutional contexts complexify an already murky social construct: diversity and its attendant issues.

## CHAPTER 6: IDEOLOGIES AND ISSUES OF AGENCY

This chapter answers research question three: What ideologies emerge and what are the implications for agency? Four ideologies are reflected in the interview transcripts: (1) individual meritocracy; (2) “goodwill” meritocracy; (3) the marginalized should be their own change agents; and (4) “playing the game” to be successful. Ideologies are the building blocks of discourse even as they are conveyed and reified through discourse and produced through structural policies and practices. They shape “our understanding of what exists, what is good, and what is possible” (Miller, 2005, p. 73), and as such, ideologies are the bedrock of social action and interaction (Therborn, 1980). These ideas are crucial for understanding how ideologies enable and constrain agency as they are reified through discursive practice. I posed the third research question to create space for understanding how diversity discourses advance ideological assumptions that may enable and/or constrain agency.

### Individual Meritocracy

One of the dominant ideologies that emerged in this study is individual meritocracy, the assumption that all individuals can be successful and that rewards should be based on individual performance (Johnson, 2001). This ideology manifested through the emphasis on individuals rather than structures. Specifically some study participants advocated for an acknowledgement of their identity and life experience outside of any socio-cultural ascriptions or group identities. Other study participants campaigned for recognition of their personal merits, efforts and contributions. Finally in response to calls for social change from the marginalized and historically underrepresented, study participants from high status groups advised that these individuals “get involved” to alleviate their feelings of exclusion. The following excerpt from a White student reflects the weight that is given to a personal identity devoid of group affiliations that is a crucial part of this ideology.

My frustration with it comes by a lot of diversity. That’s a frustrating thing because like well you know then I feel like I’m just, because I grew up in a middle class white Christian family

from the Midwest, now I'm not going to be an asset to this university because I don't meet any of these criteria of someone who came from a broken home in New York City that immigrated in 1993. It's one of those frustrating things where I would encourage the university administration to stop obsessing with the particular components of diversity.

This particular student stressed his frustration with institutional priorities that now only call attention to historically underrepresented groups. This student's comment is a criticism of policies and changing structures that have excluded him from being an "asset." His comment also reflects a call for individual recognition, and represents a form of discursive shifting that reifies the status quo by fixing meaning in an individualistic meritocratic ideology that would bypass some of the current emphasis on structural inequity by highlighting individual worth and effort.

In addition to emphasizing the merits of the individual, many study participants placed weight on individual rather than structural change efforts around diversity. For example the participant below speaks of the importance of a more compassionate view of individuals who are making an individual effort. The concern for the individual privileges individual subjects while ignoring socially produced subject positions and group identities as this comment shows:

There are a lot of people who are, they may be trying very hard to increase diversity of various sorts but they may be having a hard time with it. They have these challenges. You have to be very careful not to make them, in your wording not to make them feel like you are rejecting their efforts or that you assume that they're doing bad. You can't just go in there assuming that they're just not trying, or that they're not making an effort because there are many who are.

The excerpt below from a White female faculty member reflects that the primacy of the individual and her/his actions takes center stage reinforcing the ideology of individual meritocracy. This ideology is also reflected in a call to give individuals the benefit of the doubt while valuing any

effort—no matter how small—that they make to diversity efforts speaking to the achievement centered nature of the ideology. This ideology is also reinforced as study participants stressed the importance of individual “intentions.” The idea is that if people mean well and they are trying, then they should be commended, again centering individual efforts. This particular perspective was strengthened through the idea of valuing individual voice, wishes and beliefs as the following comment suggests:

Interviewee: I see some genuine commitment, [although] it doesn't always play out in action...If I think someone's being honest about what they wish for and believe then that's something even if the actions don't necessarily follow.

Hannah: So you value intentionality.

Interviewee: I do. It's not enough, but I don't think it can be ignored or discounted or brushed aside because it matters to people. That's who they see themselves as. We all want people to see us as we see ourselves in some way. So...[that's] seeing what they believe about themselves. And not necessarily trying to break right through it.

In addition to the emphasis on personal identity, actions, and voice, value is also placed on individual agency as the catalyst for change. There were numerous references to getting “involved” and the majority of the time, this rhetoric is used in relation to the marginalized or those that “bring diversity” or are “diverse.” One faculty member with this ideological standpoint suggested:

Reach out, attend, you know talk to people that go to things. Talk to people, get involved. I mean I've been, my success has come out of my involvements. My understanding comes out of my involvements, my ability to talk. Knowing people across campus in a variety of different ways because I worked in the teaching program and I worked in faculty governance and I do my work here and I got involved in, well I was involved in a teaching program as a

participant and then as a leader, and the Commission on Women, so it's from getting to know people who are doing all sorts of different things.

This White professor assumes that getting involved breeds understanding. Again individual thought, action, beliefs and intentions are central to institutional success. Yet the description of individual personal action and inaction conceal the consequences of socially constructed group identities, while also minimizing the effect of social structures that reflect and reinforce the status quo.

Generally this ideology advances the idea that everybody has equal opportunities and choices, and hence equal individual agency, while ignoring structural constraints such as lack of background or preparation, historical barriers to economic mobility and even institutional norms privileging whiteness. There is an assumption that everyone can and should get involved and this will be beneficial. Yet from an organizational context, this ideology veils the challenges that historically underrepresented persons such as the student below may face as a result of being the “only one” or one out of a few in some institutional contexts:

And so sometimes it can get daunting if you will to carry that cross of being an African American. So when black issues, when African American issues come up, it becomes quickly that I'm the expert or what have you...So it's not my first experience being at a PWI [predominantly white institution]. A lot of my educational background has been there and so I gravitate to ethnic centers or those types of supports to help me through....It does become somewhat lonely sometimes especially when you're talking about topics that are specifically geared to issues of race...sometimes it becomes a very tight rope in how you talk about it and what you say...

Because individuals may feel marginalized and alone, it may be hard to engage fully in the life of the community or to feel like ones voice is being heard as the above narrative suggests. This ideology can inhibit agency because the emphasis on the individual minimizes systemic oppression and limits

the possibilities for systemic change. Specifically this ideology detracts from systemic critique through the emphasis on individual action and merit. This ideology does not consider the issues that the participant above references in terms of the loneliness she experiences and the need for community she desires given the fact that she is one of a few African Americans in her program. What she captures through her comment is the paradox of individualism: individualism works when you are one in a majority, perhaps, and you desire to differentiate yourself from the crowd. Yet when you are “the only one,” and you are already set apart by some real or perceived difference, the minimal opportunities for community makes the emphasis on individualism particularly problematic for individuals who already feel marginalized and lonely. Interestingly this ideology subtly places the blame for limited success on those considered “diverse” in an organizational context. Thus it becomes their problem if they don’t meet the “standards” of higher education. The following statement from a White undergraduate student reflects this:

I mean race is totally irrelevant. It doesn’t really mean anything. I have more or less melanin that somebody else. I don’t care.

This is a particularly insightful comment that points to how talk of meritocracy is generally commingled with discourse about race. This student suggested in this interview that diversity and race don’t matter unless individuals choose to make an issue of them. This commingling and the tension it creates is at the heart of color blind rhetoric as Bonilla-Silva (2006) defines it. When individuals attempt to ignore race as the individual above is doing, instead of producing a level playing field, this move often leads to discounting the on-going machinations of racial hierarchy in the U.S. as other interview comments suggest. Statements such as, ‘Race is totally irrelevant’ and calls for individual meritocracy do not take into account the historical roots of the under-achievement and under-representation of some communities in U.S. higher education. While the idea behind individual meritocracy is to transcend race, such a discourse is in fact a re-

articulation of discourses of racial hierarchy. Equating success solely with individual effort ignores the on-going barriers to success that some U.S. Americans continue to grapple with by virtue of their identities. In light of this dynamic, Flores and Moon (2002) in the article, “Rethinking Race, Revolving Dilemmas: Imagining a New Racial Subject in Race Traitor,” advocate for recognition and consideration of the racial paradox: the desire to move beyond race while still understanding the material consequences engendered by a systemic, global and pervading racial hierarchy.

In short, discourses about individual meritocracy are in fact racial projects because color blindness as Bonilla-Silva (2006) defines it, silences the on-going marginalization of some communities by ignoring the prevalence of institutional and social barriers to success. Individual meritocracy is a function of color blindness, an ideological framework that is centered on the denial of the ongoing machinations of racial hierarchies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the othering of perspectives that do not resonate with the mainstream, normative flow of whiteness ideology, and occlusion of the consequences of the marginalization of disparate voices.

When people with higher status voices demonstrated some measure of reflexivity, it was often an encouragement to those they consider “diverse” to try harder or to seek out networks for support as evidenced in the following response from a half Asian and half White graduate student raised in “middle class suburbia:”

But at the same point I think that when you feel isolated and this probably applies more to students who are in minority groups, whatever that might be, that they should also understand that there are student groups that are there to meet their needs and to find people who do have the same experience as you and can relate to you so I think that would be my advice.

Interestingly, this student claimed in his interview that he has only begun to think of himself as multi-ethnic due to his up-bringing in a predominantly White region of the U.S. He asserts that it

was only the last few years that his “mixed” identity began to matter, yet it is not something that is “a very strong part” of his “cultural identity.” So this student’s perspective is particularly interesting and insightful.

In addition to minimizing socio-structural issues, this ideology displaces the responsibility of change. More specifically it places the responsibility on others. The following excerpt from a White student in response to the question, “Who should lead the changes and who should be involved?” is reflective of this ideological standpoint:

I feel like these are changes that should unfold or that these are changes that will unfold slowly over time and they are not things that can be done with pep rallies or campaigns or posters or flyers, these are changes that the nation is making as a whole and that students are making... So my expectation of the university is to just allow time to pass and allow students to move through them. *Respond to violations of people’s personal backgrounds* appropriately and make sure people understand that *each and every individual is important and appreciated*, but it’s not going to be done overnight and it’s not going to be done with some of these current measures the university is taking with questions on essays and things like that on applications. Or at least the way they’re currently worded. So my hope is that the university just moves along with society and the rest of the nation and just lets these changes kind of fall into place and it approaches and addresses violations of people’s rights or differences as they present themselves.

In his interview, this student praised individuals and critiqued current measures like application essays. He also constructs himself as fair by saying, “Respond to violations of people’s personal backgrounds.” Interestingly, the talk about “people” appears to be equivalent to “them.” This student advocates change that “unfolds slowly over time,” not as a result of institutional action but rather as a natural occurrence in “society.” His comment reflects abstract liberalism, a rhetoric of

reasonability that is used to explain success as a function of equal opportunity, choice, and individualism. This argument suggests that to foster equality, society cannot take radical approaches to redress defacto racism, for example, because that wouldn't be fair; such an approach will not foster equality for all since some people will receive 'special' treatment (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This argument of course, ignores the on-going struggles that some marginalized communities continue to face in achieving educational and economic equality. By advocating reactive institutional actions to "violations of people's personal background...and...rights" the student discursively minimizes the potential for proactive action to address structural inequities.

Favoring individual actions limits the agency of those in the marginalized groups because they are expected to have equal opportunities and minimal risks for getting involved. The emphasis isolated responses to marginalization preempts organizational responses to systemic inequity. In this way individual meritocracy limits the agency of those already marginalized by minimizing historical and contemporary oppressive practices. Subjects advancing this ideology generally speak from a position of higher status in that they are successful or perhaps are positioned to acquire success in ways that other persons may not be. This study suggests conversations around meritocracy in general are of vital relevance as the U.S. continues to grapple with how success *should* accrue to individuals, and how administrators, faculty and students experience it in *actuality*.

#### "Goodwill" Meritocracy

Another ideology that emerged was another form of meritocracy that appears to be socially aware. A key assumption is that standards are important for judging performance, but it may be harder for marginalized group members to meet those standards. While discursively constructing the idea of an elite class that has earned the right to, and belongs in systems of higher education, this elite group is portrayed as socially conscious and aware of the underachievement of the less fortunate, whom speakers describe as those who may not be able to "handle" higher education by

virtue of their group affiliations or life experiences. Despite this, those perpetuating this ideology employ descriptions that discursively position them as the arbiters of educational standards and norms, and it is through this that these claims become ideological. Speaking from positions of higher status, race and role positions in the context of higher education, these participants pointed to their “concern” for the marginalized, while wrapping this around talk of not “lowering standards,” for example. In this manner they advanced the idea of social awareness, while speaking from a space that enables them to set the boundaries for inclusion in institutional settings. With regard to his perception of diversity issues, the following White department chair said:

They are important [diversity initiatives]. But having said that it’s just like a wide array of other matters that are very important on this campus. I am genuinely concerned about just what can be done. It takes well, let’s face it, it takes money. It takes money, and it also takes, from a student perspective, it also takes students who are trained, or who are sufficiently prepared to enter higher education at any particular level, be it undergraduate students or be it graduate students.

This comment illustrates the *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* subject position. The comments reflecting this ideology construct an elite group that has met the exacting standards of higher education. In their interview comments, members of this group express “concern” for those who may not meet those standards and thus may have limited access to education. Additionally in their comments, these speakers reify the generalization that there is a shortage of “prepared students.”

Another hallmark of “goodwill” meritocracy are the “goodwill” intentions wrapped around a general discourse on standards:

So we are trying to do some things but it’s a long battle I think. So that’s kind of among our staff situations but in general I participate in some of the admissions planning, strategy

planning and we had a task force this past year looking at access versus success...we have quite a few students who come in with relatively low SAT scores end up taking \$25,000 or \$30,000 worth of loans, leave the university with no degree, big debt, what good have we done to these students? And so...the dilemma is do we try to ramp up the resources to support and help these students to be successful, take that money away from other kinds of activities, or do we say, 'No there are other institutions in our community.' We've got a great community college system and we have other options for students that are probably better focused on the teaching and learning environment than we are. But it's a tough thing.

Historically we've been kind of a very populous institution and have wanted to retain that access to students but when we start looking at the financial impact of what we think are sort of good will decisions, the data suggests we probably are not doing the right things.

This "goodwill" discourse minimizes the socio-structures that encourage the educational success of some groups while hindering others. This also becomes a means of advancing a culture deficit discourse about minorities as meaning converges around talk about resources and who is responsible for "helping" or preparing the under-prepared—generally defined as racial minorities. Often limited financial resources are cited as the primary deterrent to change efforts. In so doing this comment by a White administrator signals the strategic work done through references to "goodwill" and "good intentions;" this strategic discourse sanctions an interesting form of meritocracy, minimizes the need for change and centers a deficit discourse about marginalized racial groups. This deficit discourse comes to the forefront again in the following statement by a White department head:

I had some Native American students and one has the feeling that they're often a little weaker in their background....academically. Most, they're always nice, they're nice people. I don't know, maybe it's the school background or whatever, but they're often weaker. They

are. It's just my experience, I don't know. I have a limited experience but I have a certain hesitation to fail them. I don't know, you know what I mean?...I don't want to fail a Native American with all this difficulty. They already have difficulty to get here and things like that. They grew up on a reservation...It affects you in that regard. I would say I have more hesitation to fail them than I would somebody who I feel is just lazy though they might perform in the same way, you know what I mean?

While there is a description of some of the attendant social challenges faced by some marginalized groups, what is missing is a structural critique that problematizes the systemic oppression that affects the educational attainment of these communities. For example the speaker above is trying to acknowledge the differences in backgrounds but in a way that portrays Native Americans as victims and poor performers. A deficit discourse is advanced centering Native Americans' defects through stereotypical representations of life on a reservation, while positioning the speaker as liberal with positive intentions. This is the hallmark of this ideology, a seemingly reflexive orientation to social inequities that maintains the status quo. By demonstrating social concern for those who have "difficulty," these subjects position themselves as moral and their intentions as benevolent and good. The following exemplar also reflects this ideology.

It sickens me when I see a smart Hispanic student getting a scholarship to Harvard or Stanford, it just sickens me...Increase the amount of graduate student funding. Either as a teaching assistant, graduate research assistant, or as a graduate assistant, to attract graduate students from all over the country who are qualified and as diverse as possible. We can't compete in terms of bringing qualified students of ethnic descent to our graduate program because they get twice as much from other institutions. Pure and simple. It's not that we don't want to. If I gave you that impression earlier on, that's not the case. But my colleagues are not going to bring individuals who are not prepared. What are we going to do? Have

them in the department for a semester, [a] year and then flunk them out? It's not the way to do it.

As this comment from another White department chair shows, a general trend is emerging in this ideology and that is the effort to commingle it with discourse about race. This particular comment, for example, is reflective of one of the tools of color blind racism as identified by Bonilla-Silva (2006): cultural racism. This tool of color blind racism points to the “deficits” in a cultural group as the primary reason for continued imbalances and inequities. As Bonilla-Silva (2006) notes, examples might be claims like, “Mexicans are crossing the U.S. illegitimately because they are too lazy to go through the process of applying for a green card.” “Black kids aren't achieving in school because the black community does not value education.” These claims place the blame of any social or economic disadvantages of minorities in society on those particular groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Bonilla-Silva asserts that this tool of color blindness ignores institutional problems and social practices that encourage problematic social hierarchies that engender economic, educational, political, and even social inequities.

The discursive shifting is reminiscent of Halualani, Fassett, Morrison, and Shaou-Whea Dodge's 2006 study, “Between the Structural and the Personal: Situated Sense-Makings of ‘Race.’” In this study Halualani et al. interviewed participants regarding their experiences with diversity through the word race. These authors found that people construct race on a discursive plane and wield multiple conceptualizations of the word to suit different needs. For instance Halualani et al. called these dynamic shifts in the multiple articulations of race *racial pivoting*. These articulations strip structural racism of significance while placing the burden for structural change squarely on marginalized group members and individuals.

Finally the comments mobilized by individuals espousing this ideology advance a sense of reasonability that is hard to question.

I think there's a lot of sensitivity and concern and support. I think like anywhere else it's [diversity's] not at the forefront for everybody and therefore often it's not the thing that matters most. But I think there's a good climate. It doesn't mean that everything that could be done is done. It doesn't mean that the resources are there for everything, but I think there's a general support and openness. Beyond openness, an affirmative commitment to the issues doesn't mean that when resources are tight and you have a conflict and you have to choose...it doesn't mean it's going to be the number one thing, but don't expect anything to be the number one thing all the time...I think there's a lot of agreement and support for diversity variously defined.

These claims by a White faculty member affirm that there is a “good climate [and]...general support and openness.” These descriptors paint a positive picture of the processes of diversity at this university restricting the potential for critique.

The ideas of “goodwill” and “good intentions” that are discursively constructed through this ideology camouflage the privilege that is at work—that is the privilege to stand in a space and determine who can and should participate in institutions. While those speaking from this ideological space appeared to consider systemic oppression, it was often in the sense of, “Yes, but there is only so much that can be done until there is a ‘pipeline’” for example. The idea of simply being aware of social inequities sanctions a limited critique of oppressive systems, the reasonability of the ideology lends it credibility, and the future oriented nature of some of the discourse in this ideology removes the onus for orchestrating change in the present. By default, the system never changes, but those who are being “brought in” through the “pipeline” are simply prepared to “enter the system.” As a result, this ideology lends to the creation of and feeds the notion of in/out groups, buttressing the notion of an elite sect that is qualified to be in higher education:

Especially students who are not in the mainstream of that culture. You're not going to change the culture so you've got to understand it and figure out how you fit in. And that often means change in some ways, your own behaviors, refining your own background...Not everybody should do that, not everybody has to do that, but if you want to be successful in a particular institution or world, you've got to figure out how the rules of that game operate and how you're going to relate to them.

Invariably the groups on the outside are those who are "not in the mainstream" as this excerpt from a White professor implies. What is interesting is that there was no critique of why some groups are on the outside, thereby reifying hierarchy. Importantly this hierarchy reinforces the status quo and the on-going marginalization of groups that are ascribed a lower status. This limits the opportunities for advancement accorded these groups, which is not a new idea. What is new is the socially "aware" and "concerned" edge that the discourse of meritocracy has taken on through the discourse of "goodwill."

Speakers voicing this ideology tend to speak from higher status, racially privileged positions. Their discourse contains liberal views through a concern for minorities. This ideology positions them as allies with intentions to support minorities who need their help. The following response from an African and American graduate student leader shows this ideology at work in constraining the agency of this respondent:

But I find myself on some level of being silenced just because I guess it's the nature of the beast in a sense and I have to look at the bigger prize at the end of the tunnel which is to gain my Ph.D. so I have more power not only to listen to the conversation, but then start engaging in the conversation. But at this stage you kind of have to... as you get higher in education it becomes there's that educational foundation yes, but the political game I think as well. And what you say and how you say it and pleasing, if you will, your committee

members and so the educational journey for African American females is really interesting and it becomes a beast. It can be daunting at times, it can be depressing at times, it can be exhausting at times but I think about what I'm doing and why I'm doing it and it makes it worth the while to get back in there and take a deep breath and I'm in it to win it. And you know I'm happy that I do have great folks on my committee who can have in depth conversations about race and diversity just because my topic surrounds itself around that. So we have to have those types of conversations which I'm glad I can have, but I just know sometimes it is a tight rope and I have to choose my battles and what I say and how I say it. Because those committed to this ideological standpoint are now allies who have "good intentions," and "goodwill," it is very hard to critique the ways that they may be encouraging problematic social norms and the status quo as the exemplar above from a graduate student of color suggests. This is similar to the discourse from some white speakers working on diversity related issues; these speakers expressed personal affront when charged with "not getting it" by their racially underrepresented colleagues. While discursively constructing themselves as liberal and progressive, they do not have to "choose their battles" and "Walk a tight rope." So in many respects this ideology minimizes the possibilities for change because critique of those advancing this ideology must be delivered strategically and "carefully" to avoid offending them.

In addition to being careful in confronting issues and delivering critique, some study participants addressed how this ideology impedes their identity performance and negotiation:

I'm an African American male that has gone through quite a substantial amount of pressure in terms of receiving a degree, a terminal degree. Pressure in terms of being cautious of what I write about, being cautious of what I read about, being cautious of what I say and so I have to craft myself. I have to be able to craft my identity and sometimes be careful with the population and surroundings I'm in to do that.

Other participants also addressed the need to be “careful” given the potential sanctions in the form of reduced programmatic funding (ethnic center budgets for example), the loss of “community support” for particular group interests or even alienation in one’s department. All of these actions speak to how individuals must carefully present themselves to avoid offending stakeholders of “goodwill” who have institutional pull yet may be grounded in a meritocratic ideology that delimits their ability to see how they may be contributing to the marginalization of some individuals. In addition it points to the commingling, dependency and contingency of identities as highlighted by Mennell (1994) in describing the work of identity politics.

Specifically Mennell (1994) asserts that humans are not solitary. He suggests that our “self-images and we-images...have been formed over time within groups of interdependent people” (p. 176). He deepens the discourse and becomes Du Boisian in his analysis when he suggests that when power relations between insiders and outsiders are greatly imbalanced, as they have been in the U.S. context, “the oppressed and exploited cannot escape from their position. This is one of the conditions which makes it most likely that they will take into their own we-image what the established [insiders] say about them...” and of course the outsiders are always portrayed as “dirty, morally unreliable, and lazy” (p. 182). He argues that this has a constitutive effect on the we-image of the oppressed and the privileged invariably affecting their self consciousness, and feelings of empowerment and agency. In the context of this ideology, the commingling happens through an ideology that connects the marginalized and privileged through a discourse of care and concern that strategically creates a bridge and partition between both groups at the very same time. In so doing, it maintains the status quo and the power relations between both groups. This too is the ideological work that “goodwill” meritocracy does.

While this ideology claims to be grounded in social awareness, concern, and finally, fairness, what is missing is due consideration for the ways that this type of meritocracy perpetuates structures

that privilege particular people in a systemic way. Individuals grounded in this ideology are privileged through the historical construction of the standards for inclusion in an elite sect and the valuation of particular ways of knowing and being. The coupling of this ideology with a seemingly benevolent edge and “goodwill” intentions sanctions the reasonability of this ideology while bracketing the agency of individuals who might problematize this ideology.

#### The Marginalized Should be Their Own Change Agents

The third ideology that emerged is concerned with social action and change. Specifically, a large number of the participants in this study expressed a worldview that positions those perceived as marginalized and oppressed, in the context of a diverse society, as the primary change agents of the current social structure. These individuals suggested that change should be initiated by these persons and groups. Additionally, they asserted that change should “percolate” from the bottom. While this may seem like a practical perspective to change, it works ideologically in the way that it constructs the subject position of persons who fit into the normative flow of the current social structure and that of persons constructed as “diverse” or “different.” It acts to enable those privileged in the current social structure to maintain that privilege through inaction perhaps. But even more specifically it offers privileged persons committed to this ideology an opportunity to minimize their contributions to the present social structure by placing the burden for change on those “needing” change. For those speaking from group positions of whiteness, it is a way of seeing the world and one’s place in the world as distinctive, and separate from the lived experience of persons and communities experiencing inequity. It is an ideology grounded in group separatism that privileges and reproduces a problematic social structure where the privileged may bask in that privilege unapologetically with minimal concern for groups whose success may be hindered by that very privilege. This ideology is grounded in the understanding that change should come from the

“margins” after all these are the persons who “care the most” and understand the issues as the following interviewee affirms.

I think the bottom line comes down to school leadership and I think it comes down to the administration, faculty and the students, so I don't think that any one of those groups is completely responsible because I think they're all accountable to one another. As far as I think the people that should lead those changes are the people from any of those groups that see the problems most clearly and I think that depends on people stepping up in whatever position they are in and to have a voice. I think it depends on a healthy infrastructure I guess to student government, to faculty governance and administration that they be open and listen to the issues and have their finger up to the post on those issues as they come up. So yeah I think everyone should be involved and that anyone can lead those.

The key phrase in this comment is sandwiched in the middle: “the people that should lead those changes are the people from any of those groups that see the problems most clearly.” One of the challenges with issues of power and privilege has been the ability of the privileged to *not* see their power and privilege (Johnson, 2001; Tierney & Jackson, 2002); this therefore means that the marginalized are often the groups that *have* to see and respond. This narrative is typical of the comments that a number of participants offered. On the surface it privileges “buy-in” from the top, but the prevailing idea is that the oppressed have to initiate, encourage, and enforce action as referenced in the following statement:

I think there has to be buy-in at the top, real buy-in but there has to be, it has to percolate, like anything has to come from below and be embraced from above. Lead from above but only in the sense of support and making it. It has to be noted to be of importance publicly and repeatedly but it can't be made of importance by speaking from the top.

Again, the initiating parties are the marginalized. Administrators sanction the efforts these groups initiate and lead by supporting them, thereby conveying institutional buy-in. Invariably, this ideology minimizes the complexity of the structural change that may be needed by constructing the key players as: (1) the persons most affected by said issues; and (2) the leadership of institutions.

The central theme is that the marginalized, or their allies need to orchestrate change. This idea comes to the forefront in the following exemplar from a White graduate student leader:

I think that the leadership has to come from a couple different places. I think you have to have the leaders of your institution, your presidents and your provosts and your dean saying that this is an institutional commitment for us and we are on board with this. I think that has to happen. I think that you have to have students and faculty and staff who are representative of those communities or who care about and are allies to those communities being a part of it. I think it obviously has to come from the ground up.

While appearing logical, this ideology reflects an impractical bent by suggesting that a large segment of the population can stand by as idle observers with no responsibility to “see” issues of power and privilege or to work for change. Thus by placing the burden of change in the hands of the “communities that are affected,” those who “care,” and those who are “allies,” the individuals empowered to act for change are seemingly those who have “the most to gain.” As I think about issues of diversity, power and privilege, this ideological perspective is the very reason why issues of marginalization, oppression and inequity have been labeled ‘minority’ problems. In short this ideology limits the agency of a large segment of society by suggesting that they do not need to participate because *these issues* are not *their issues*.

This ideology has emerged from a long history of otherizing. In *Critical and Cultural Studies*, Cavallaro (2001) introduces this idea by reaching back to G.W.F. Hegel’s (1770-1831) notion “that human consciousness is incapable of perceiving itself without recognition by others” (p. 120). To

know itself, human consciousness must be able to delineate itself from others. Due to this phenomenological and existential emphasis upon the idea of consciousness, Cavallaro argues that the:

Other is the factor that enables the subject to build up a self-image. The other is the person or group that confers meaning upon the subject by either helping it or forcing it to adopt a particular world view and to define its position therein. (Cavallaro, 2001, p. 121)

In the context of this study, participants with greater privilege constructed themselves and the other in light of this ideology. They speak for the other and describe what the other should do. By not being the person needing to affect change, these voices speak from a separate identity location apart from the negativity attached to those problematized positionalities.

This ideology may act to impede the success of marginalized persons in organizations. In addition to doing the work they are hired to do, they are also expected to contribute to anything that relates to diversity as representative voices. The clearest example of this in higher education is faculty of color, who are expected to participate extensively on multiple fronts because they are the “only one,” or what some may call, token representatives. So on one level, they are included. Yet on another level, they are expected to represent communities that are themselves diverse, often, and in different capacities. This overwhelming responsibility detracts from their ability to contribute to the institutions they are a part of in other ways.

Therefore this ideology leaves out groups who are not upper administrators nor marginalized students in advancing campus change. In so doing the responsibility for change lies in the hands of those affected and who care, and leaders who lend their “support,” which is often verbal. If these individuals choose inaction, then by default, social inequities will abound because the unaffected, generally the majority, have no responsibility to ensure fairness and equity or to even *see* inequity or how they benefit from established structures. As such the significant pressure to actualize and

champion social change in the campaign for equity can become a significant source of burnout for marginalized persons in institutions.

#### Marginalized Group Members must “Play the Game” to be Successful

The final ideology that emerged dealt specifically with how racial minorities in higher education negotiate their positionalities and levels of agency in that context. These individuals addressed how they speak, position themselves and manage their interactions in a social space where they are the minorities. Elements of this ideology emerged in preceding sections, but in this section, I flesh out some of the characteristics of this ideology.

This ideology is grounded in the idea that there is an established order and way of being in higher education that silences and requires racial minorities to carefully act in higher education institutions. Interviewees captured this by saying things like, “you just have to play the game,” “We don’t need any martyrs,” and “It’s the nature of the beast.” The following comment from an African American graduate student reflects the element of censoring oneself to be successful.

Interviewee: But I find myself on some level of being silenced just because I guess it’s the nature of the beast in a sense...

Hannah: So when if ever have you felt heard about your views on diversity?

Interviewee: I think there are certain officials on this campus that hear what the challenges are which is good [but] sometimes their hands are tied at different political levels ... And some of my colleagues they hear me but to a certain extent I keep that kind of reserved just because you don’t want to, I don’t want to get on the, “oh woe is me...” So...I have those conversations but there’s a little bit of code switching, if you will, to a certain extent. But I have more candid conversations around those who are working that plight and can have an appreciation.

Hannah: Who code switches?

Interviewee: I code switch a lot in conversations. So what I say to, I call it my Ph.D. core...could be very different than what I say to a professor on my committee, a professor in my program, it's a very different conversation. Same intent but it's a very different conversation.

Scholars like Jackson (1999a; 1999b) suggest that some marginalized individuals are required to code-switch in institutional contexts where they are the minorities. In this context, this graduate student like others in this study, addresses how she communicates her perspective while addressing the nature of the context where she works. As a minority in said context, she articulates an understanding that her perspective is not the standard nor the norm and so to be successful she must say the right things at the right time and to the right people.

There were also faculty members who expressed elements of this ideology. In the following excerpt, this department chair addresses how he moved through the ranks by playing the game for the greater good.

Interviewee: Well I bet you, I'd probably have to go back to when I was assistant professor. So one of the nice things about having tenure is saying what you want to say, right?...But as an assistant professor, coming through the ranks [of institution], ...at times I have felt that I have to kind of keep some things to myself because it may affect my teaching assistantship...But as an untenured professor at first, I had to keep quiet. I also kind of kept quiet even when I got here because of the pressure of, in a way, you know being accused of being a sellout... As an African American man you should be doing whatever you can to protect African American students. And to protect this established program [serving African American students]. And if you question it, you know...[people] kind of question your personal authenticity. Are you really down for your people, which can be a powerful deterrent especially being an untenured person.

In addition to the limitations placed on him by members of the majority, this African American department chair also speaks of managing intra-group conflicts that stem from how he performs his identity. The overall idea that a number of persons pointed to is that of a game that has to be played and won. What is particularly insightful is the notion that this ‘game’ and the rules aren’t created by the speakers, but they choose to play because it is the only option available to earning the Ph.D. or tenure. In order to be a winner in the context of the game, one has to follow the rules. One of the rules of this game is that you have to say the right things, and do the right things to survive and to get to the ultimate prize—be it graduation, tenure, departmental funding, or respect and inclusion in ones own department and program.

Thus for many graduate student interviewees of color, who arguably have a large stake in this conversation about equity in higher education, the ultimate aim is to survive to ensure the greater good, which is to graduate and then take action for justice in their careers. The following comment by an administrator captures an element of this ideology:

Interviewee: When I was working on my Ph.D., that was probably the most painful experience of my entire academic career. Knowing I couldn’t say anything because I wanted that degree to get out...I think they were all good people [committee] in many ways but when you have somebody tell you after you’ve passed your orals, your comprehensive exams, “I’m surprised you did so well,” you know those kinds of things are really damning... And you don’t know whether it’s because you’re a woman, a Mexican or all of those things ...I mean I failed my Master’s exam because the guy said, “The only thing you care about are Chicanos.” And I said well I thought you told me you wanted me to apply the theory and this would be the population I’d be working with...[I] could have dropped out and I said, “No I’m not going to be pushed out of here, I have a right to be here. I can do this and I did it.

Hannah: You stayed that extra [time]?

Interviewee: Yeah, but you know it toughened me up... As a professional you go through this all your life. You're a marginalized person, so I guess I could be a victim and I could have acted that way, but I did not. I said no, "I'm going to get my degree and I'm going to go on and do the work that I was meant to do on this earth."

For this Chicana administrator, it was refusing to be victimized to graduate so that she could go on to do the work that would ensure that other students had a better experience in later years. So for her, playing the game was compromising, and doing all that her committee required such that she could graduate and be in a position of leadership in higher education in the future. So for many individuals it is a balancing act as reflected in the following comment by a Black faculty member:

Hannah: When if ever have you felt silenced?

Interviewee: I mean again, during my dissertation, but all of this being silenced, being accepted, this is the game. So again it's never one or the other, it's learning how to balance the emotion that comes with being silenced or misunderstood with the passion to engage in the practice of truth tellers.

The balancing act is knowing that survival in higher education is a game and sacrifices must be made to be successful in the game in order to become an official that can change the rules. Part of changing the rules for many people is being able to share ones message in order to be heard. So in addition to balancing ones emotions, there was even talk of balancing ones message to enhance its reception in spaces where one is a minority and the valuation of ones contributions are perpetually under scrutiny:

Hannah: So given some of your experiences...as an elected official, all the things you do, what groups do you think speak the loudest about diversity issues...?

Interviewee: The ethnic centers. But they have to be careful, too.

Hannah: They have to be careful?

Interviewee: Sure. They don't have recurring funding. The funding has to, now they have recurring funding for basic operations meaning their staff of one or two permanent employees stay but they don't have enough funding for anything else. Making copies, buying computers, they've got no recurring funding for any of that. That funding has to come on a year to year basis. So they've got to be careful how loud they speak...

The excerpt above from a Latin American graduate student addresses how individuals, programs and groups must share their message with care given their precarious standing in the context of higher education. Another excerpt from a Mexican American administrator working on diversity initiatives further illuminates this point.

Interviewee: They [ethnic centers] speak very loudly, sometimes the messages aren't appropriate but they speak quite loudly.

Hannah: Really?

Interviewee: What I mean by that is, I mean the messages might be conflicting. In that you know you have three groups [Hispanic, American Indian, and European American] and they don't always coordinate their communication and so it sends a mixed message to folks about diversity. The way they communicate sometimes might signal to folks that their agenda is maybe one sided.

Hannah: Personal perhaps.

Interviewee: Very personal and maybe very adversarial. And so as a consequence I think sometimes they may not be respected for the really positive things that they do on this campus. And so my role...has really been to try to get all of us on the same page. To get all of us to work on delivering the same messages about the students that we serve and how we

can serve them better and then to demonstrate to the administration how important they are as units—because they do play a very, very important, important role.

Therefore this idea of playing the game for the greater good suggests that there is a standard in higher education and those in the minority must speak and act in a way that ensures compliance with the rules so that they can ‘win’ and be included at higher levels of the game. Once at higher levels, these persons believe that they have greater opportunities to change the game, but in order to get to that place, they must first ‘play’ at lower levels. Even those at higher levels of administration expressed the need to pay vigilant attention to their communication tactics to avoid sounding adversarial and they discussed efforts geared towards minimizing “one-sided” agendas.

This ideology impacts the agency of racial minorities by enforcing the boundaries for their actions and reifying those boundaries through daily interaction. The individuals quoted here are committed to higher education and endeavor to work within the system to gain more influence. The following interview excerpt from an African American student shows one of the ways that this works.

Interviewee: It’s a game and you have to learn how to play it, you have to. That’s a balance because some people think that if I’m not an advocate and I’m not the Huey Newton Black Panther at every turn, then I’m selling out...My theory is a little bit different. Yeah...you don’t sell out, you definitely are in there, but it’s how you posture your conversation and it’s what you say. And you can still get the same message across...I think that you have to learn the game for the bigger good so you can be in a position to instill power to other underrepresented folks. It’s kind of like the plight of our esteemed president Barack Obama, period. But I think that message, that inauguration message--it was a message very clearly for black folks. Now he didn’t say okay black folk, this is what I need you to do, but in a sense

he was like okay the excuses are over I need everyone to pull up, pull up your boots, let's go because this is going to be a battle.

According to this interviewee, agency comes from working within the established boundaries of higher education to attain the power to influence that system in the future. While this reflects a constrained agency, it is a form of agency that agitates from within as the following comment shows:

Interviewee: Again as I come back to being a tenured person, being a department chair, you know you have built in authority, built in power to have your visions heard. And like it or not as an African American professor, as a tenured African American you're going to be called upon to be the voice of these diversity initiatives. So I think the trick is to kind of convince people to have an expansive view about what diversity is and not just to have a narrow understanding. So that's basically my path that I've been on. Whenever I get a call to serve on a committee, sometimes they want people to just be a face on the committee right. And if they want you to come, don't rock the boat too much. So I've got to make sure that I'm on those committees and people do pay attention to me. But luckily for me being a chair being a tenured person, being a man of course, being a powerfully built man, you know you have all these sorts of built in things that work to my advantage that people can hear me. I think also I have a reputation for someone who's willing to work through various ideas.

This faculty member admits some key things: (1) being one of a few faculty of color, he will be called on to be a representative voice; (2) oftentimes people desire his presence but not his voice necessarily when it is in opposition to the goals of the group in question; and (3) despite this, he chooses to find ways to ensure that he is heard. These three points acknowledge the "default" system of higher education that privileges certain ways of being over others, while also reflecting

how marginalized groups within that system may advocate for change. So the sense of agency does not come from bucking the system, but from working within it for change.

Gramsci (1971) suggests that hegemony is never simply one group enforcing its will, but rather ideologies become hegemonic through consent—one group creating standards and others agreeing to those standards. The following statement from an African American student highlights this point:

I code-switch a lot in conversations so what I say to, I call it my Ph.D. core...What I say to my core could be very different than what I say to a professor on my committee, a professor in my program. It's a very different conversation. Same intent but it's a very different conversation.

This comment demonstrates that for some marginalized individuals in higher education, success means playing the political game and being cautious, which has major implications for limiting individual agency. Specifically, to “play the game,” one must recognize normative constraints and acquiesce to ensure success. These ideas make this discourse ideological and even hegemonic; in an effort to change the system from within, persons of color in higher education conform and consent to that same system by “playing the game.” This idea is visible in this final narrative that captures the complexity of the attendant issues. Specifically in recognition of the system/game, the following African American faculty member speaks of how faculty of color can strategically negotiate their positionality in higher education:

Basically I...[have a] quarterback theory of the university. So that if you're a faculty of color, you're automatically going to be approached to speak about these issues. Especially when diversity is applied to racial and ethnic diversity. So you have these pressures to serve on committees, to work with students, to do all this extra service work while you're trying to get tenure. So like a quarterback on a football team, you have both individual team levels and

institutional level things that you can do to protect yourself. On the institutional level they can have rules that define when you can't touch the quarterback so like in the NFL for instance..., when you release the ball if you're more than two steps away, you can't tackle the quarterback. So that's an institutional rule. On a team level rule, the coach can say, 'We're going to run the ball more than having the quarterback throwing the ball a lot.' So the quarterback doesn't get tackled quite a bit. On an individual level, the quarterback can decide..., 'If I'm running with the ball and somebody's coming at me I can skip out or try to run over this person.' Same things can happen in terms of higher education....On a team level, the chair can protect some of the junior faculty from some of these commitments. So if the college needs somebody to be on the diversity board, the chair can...appoint somebody who has tenure. [On the] individual level, the faculty member can say 'no' to some of these things. And that's perfectly okay. And on the institutional level...maybe [for] some of these diversity initiatives they can make sure that it's not just untenured people. They really have to approach people with tenure...

In this comment is a recognition of the social structure of U.S. higher education, which is driven by a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision (Goldberg, 1994). Despite this vision, interviewees of color express a commitment to affect that system and to make it work for faculty and students of color. Therefore agency is negotiated moment by moment in the "game," as contingent, institutional, social and cultural. This ideology also illuminates a form of agency that seeks to work from within to change the status quo. The crucial question however is whether this ideology does indeed work, or whether it simply reifies the status quo.

### Conclusion

Ideologies shape "our understanding of what exists, what is good and what is possible"

(Miller, 2005, p. 162). As I have presented in this chapter, the four ideologies implicated in the interview discourse reveal ideas of what exists and what is possible. For some individuals what is possible is a system where their perspective is the governing perspective to which all should subscribe. For others it is standing solidly in one's own positionality, expressing liberal views and leaving the marginalized to negotiate the contextualities of their space. For others yet, it is seeing how one fits into a larger structure and choosing how one works with, or resists that structure. For all, what is significant is the belief that institutional and social structures exist, and it is the operation of both structures and discursive positioning that shape individual and group agency. Interestingly all four ideologies point to a larger ideological framework that is, perhaps, no surprise given the topic of this study: whiteness ideology.

In recent years, much has been done to theorize whiteness, yet many scholars still assert that the power of whiteness lies in its ability “not to be anything” (Dyer, 1993, p. 141). This notion resonates with West's (2005) idea that “whiteness is omnipresent yet invisible because it is everywhere and nowhere all at once” (West, 2005, p. 386). Yet this “invisibility” and “omnipresence” of whiteness is made possible only with the help of the non-white other. In this study, those otherized in U.S. higher education advance the hegemonic workings of whiteness by “playing the game,” for example. Consequently, Cavallaro's (2001) work on the “other” is insightful for this particular conversation. Specifically, I assert that it is the other that gives the White subject a sense of being by allowing it to “build up a self-image” (p. 121). This self image is often grounded in what the subject is not, by virtue of what the other is. In the context of this study, the other must meet the standards of higher education, work for equitable social systems and comply with the established system to be successful. This creates a picture, wherein Whites have an idealized sense of being that is grounded in their privilege as the group that does not need change and the group that establishes the standards of U.S. higher education.

Furthermore, these dynamics reflect Toni Morrison's notion of "American Africanism," which she advances in her 1992 book, *Playing in the Dark*. Morrison postulates that Africanism gave the idealized "new white man" in America an image from which to differentiate itself (Morrison, 1992, p. 39). This new white man, in an effort to manage his fears and "rationalize external exploitation," created an image of another in the form of "American Africanism—a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire" (Morrison, 1992, p. 38). Fiske (1996) postulates that Morrison's notion of Africanism has done for "the white American what Orientalism did for the Westerner" by creating an other that whiteness can define itself in relation to (also see Said, 1979). This dynamic materializes in this study as White subjects discursively mobilize ideological assumptions that set them apart from groups who do "not fit," are "underprepared" or "need help."

As a historical discursive formation with contemporary relevance, Africanism includes the wide range of ideas that accompany what it means to be the "other" in the U.S. context and is a powerful tool in "policing matters of class..., formations and exercises of power, and mediations on ethics and accountability" (p. 7). Thus in the American context:

Africanism is the vehicle by which the American [defined initially as the discursive domain of northern European persons] self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution but a progressive fulfillment of destiny. (Morrison, 1992, p. 52)

This notion of whiteness defining itself by what it is not, in *light* of an imagined, 'dark' other, is particularly insightful in this conversation on discourses of diversity, the ideologies they encourage and the implications therein. Specifically, the ideologies reflected by the interviews point, in an interesting way, to how identity politics in the U.S. establish normative ways of being that reify

in/out groups, while maintaining the boundaries for success in U.S. society along the lines of a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision (Goldberg, 1994).

Finally, there are studies that emphasize whiteness as a function of the operation of racial politics and general identity politics along an axis of power. Over the last twenty years, the discourse on whiteness has evolved and is now defined by scholars as an ideological system that has grave implications both in the U.S. and the rest of the world. Tierney and Jackson (2002) define whiteness as

The ideological framework of North American society. This segment of society is white...[but] [w]hiteness is a matter not simply of race but also of class. Whiteness is not simply physical. It is socio-political and is characterized by very real and concrete racial dynamics. (p. 84)

Miller and Harris (2003) also note that whiteness is a social system and that many Whites are not aware of the privileges they enjoy because they do not see themselves as “racial beings” (p. 224). Being non-racial lends tremendous power to whiteness because Whites can deny not only the existence of this racialized hegemonic structure, but also the intrinsic benefits of being the dominant group in the system. Subsequently the interviews demonstrate that rarely did those speaking from positions of privilege acknowledge their status and location. The discourses that revealed whiteness tended to be offered from those positioned as White and often male. Those voices also spoke for, as well as about marginalized groups.

The ideologies that emerged in this study highlight how whiteness both sets and upholds the standards within a system; in fact, it has become a force that controls material and mental production. For instance, Orbe (1998) suggests that members of non-dominant groups are sometimes forced to code-switch or employ co-cultural communication tactics to be successful in organizations where a monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision is the norm as is the case in higher

education. Unsurprisingly, interviewees with a marginalized status addressed how they practice code-switching tactics in their daily activities. As such this study shows how whiteness is the standard by which persons and actions are judged, and this intrinsic power serves to reify the notion of race and the historical baggage attached to it. Thus while many interviewees attempted to deny race in their definitions of diversity, their comments and the ideologies that emerged in this study suggest that race remains an organizing construct in U.S. society and its institutions. It is even reflected in how high status individuals take for granted systemic benefits that privilege them while forcing others to “play the game” in order to be successful in U.S. higher education.

Individual meritocracy, “goodwill” meritocracy, the claim that the marginalized should be their own change agents and the ideology of “playing the game” to be successful all impact agency on a number of fronts. On the one hand these ideologies set the boundaries for institutional change in interesting and compelling ways. In fact, it is these ideological perspectives that affect how policies and institutional action around diversity are received and perceived (Therborn, 1980).

The ideologies reify the status quo by focusing on standards of individual performance, a political liberalism that benefits persons with privileges reflective of a pervasive, taken-for-granted racial hierarchy, and a coping strategy of “playing the game. Any sort of critique of the “good climate” around diversity is carefully delivered as historically underrepresented speakers “walk a tight rope” in institutional climates where they are the minority. It is noteworthy that the ideologies that emerged from differently positioned speakers appear problematic for affecting change and for the success of marginalized persons in institutions. Beyond the effect on institutions, these ideologies have crucial implications because it is evident that they contribute to the creation of particular subject positions and reinforce others, while establishing the boundaries for social action.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*Thus we have been led by our theories often to underestimate the struggle involved in forging identities, the tension inherent in the fact that we all have multiple, incomplete and/or fragmented identities (and sometimes resistances), the politics implied in the differential public standing of various identities or identity claims, and the possibilities for our salient constructions of identities to change in the context of powerfully meaningful, emotionally significant events—like many social movements.*

(Calhoun, 1994, p. 24)

Arnett (2001) asserts that the current era is marked by fragmentation, a multiplicity of narratives and a fear of difference. This fragmentation and fear of difference manifest through the privatization of some issues, and the ideological sway other issues hold in influencing social processes and interactions. Further, as recent scholarship in the field of diversity and identity politics suggest, fragmented narratives and the discursive struggle over meaning will only be exacerbated through increasing debates over immigration, cultural diversity, and the proliferation of critical scholarship in the near future (Goldberg, 1994; Jackson, Shin & Wilson, 2000). In this dissertation, I explored a contemporary discursive struggle by considering the multiple ways diversity is conceptualized by those affiliated with two academic institutions in contemporary U.S. culture and the social consequences therein.

Through this study I uncovered multiply occurring views of diversity. Combining standpoint theory as a theoretical lens with critical discourse analysis, this study has several important outcomes. This study fosters an understanding of subject positions, and levels of agency as it emerges in the intersections between contextual structures and socially constructed identities. Different subject positions encourage different standpoints and perspectives on diversity. Specifically, meaning arises about social phenomena at the intersections of socially constructed identities, which include race and status positioning, among others. This analysis shows that different subject positions emerge from

different standpoints and engender different views of diversity. The relations between subject positions, standpoints and social phenomena becomes dialogic to a point where they work hand in hand to construct and reproduce a social order where individuals and groups are positioned differently, and in the context of this study, diversity is understood, and operationalized differently as a result. In this way, this study demonstrates how standpoints impact understandings of the world, while also impacting the behavior of socially situated subjects.

This study also creates space to understand how different conceptualizations of diversity lead to a call for resistance or preservation of the status quo. Data revealed how groups who are marginalized in a social order with unequal distribution of material and socio-cultural capital attempted to contest said material conditions, while others who benefit from the present system called for retrenchment in favor of the status quo which maintains their privileges.

Finally this study illuminates the ideological underpinnings of views of diversity and how said ideologies reproduce status hierarchies. The ideologies have social and material implications for how diversity may or may not be understood and practiced institutionally. This analysis also explores the operation of challenges to dominant narratives of diversity and difference, with a clear call to understand intersecting identities and oppressions, while illuminating how marginalized groups may contribute to the reproduction of a problematic social order through an ideology of consent (“playing the game”).

#### Interpretations of Findings and Implications

In this section, I look across the views of diversity, ideologies and critiques to establish a foundation for offering recommendations for moving forward. The *extreme pluralism* subject position suggests that diversity is the inclusion of as much difference as possible. These individuals suggested that the current system is fine, that more people with diverse perspectives simply need to be included. Therefore this subject position acts to encourage assimilation because again, the system

does not need to change, but individuals coming into the system may need to change to be successful. One of the key ideas behind extreme pluralism is the assumption that all individuals have equal opportunities and all differences are equal. Individuals advancing this discourse generally claimed a White racial identity as their standpoint. Whiteness is often accompanied by an ideology of individual meritocracy which suggests that all individuals can be successful, yet does not give due diligence to social and institutional barriers that may enable and constrain different subjects. Specifically, historically marginalized persons in U.S. higher education may experience greater barriers to their success than Whites who are well represented in U.S. higher education.

The *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* subject position calls for continuing reflection about what diversity really means and the feasibility of any effort or institutional practice. Interview transcripts suggest that this subject position is grounded in the thinking stages of working through the meaning of the socio-cultural changes taking place in the U.S. These individuals described trying to process through what diversity means for their work, departments, programs and institutions. Data suggested that this subject position also includes a resistance to change, and the reinforcement of the status quo. The discourse that emerged reflected comfort with the institution and a desire to make small changes to ensure that the system does not change markedly. Interview responses revealed that these subjects advocate thorough analysis of any change because of the idea that change is very complicated, and the system may just need to be adjusted to weave non-traditional people (defined as people of color predominantly) into the institutional fold. Finally these individuals implied that any action that creates imbalance (giving more incentives to recruit faculty of color for example) is unfair and should be avoided. In short these individuals favor incremental action that does not change the system significantly, is carefully thought through, and yet to be determined.

The individuals advancing this discourse tended to be self designated White male leaders. In fact the majority of speakers espousing this view of diversity were male department heads. This discourse reflects the ideology of “goodwill” meritocracy. These individuals voiced an awareness of the social conditions that necessitate diversity initiatives yet they wrapped this discourse around concern for “lowering standards.” These individuals voiced a concern for not altering the status quo significantly, which is a move that was critiqued by other interviewees in this study. While persons embedded in the *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* subject position advocated for the status quo, other interviewees critiqued this as the precursor to diversity initiatives becoming a “public relations campaign” that is basically lip service that does not fully consider the socio-political “struggle” that issues of equity and inclusion should engender. Instead this subject position promotes “goodwill” meritocracy. “Goodwill” meritocracy is an ideology that encourages abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) which appears progressive, yet may not actively work to address problematic structures and historical oppression.

The *diversity “work” offers socio-political currency* subject position suggested that diversity matters and diversity “work” is important. The focus in this conceptualization of diversity is the work individuals are doing in the area of diversity. Individuals advancing this conceptualization of diversity generally claimed a White racial identity. These individuals tended to be doing research on diversity or are charged with overseeing diversity efforts in some way on their campus. One of the ideas advanced by this conceptualization of diversity is a “goodwill” diversity that focuses on people’s individual actions and their “good” intentions. This perspective on diversity suggests that diversity issues are important, people are doing the best they can, and they should be recognized for their efforts. Thus the efforts being made by individuals should be recognized given the “good” intentions they have, and the passion they demonstrate. In this way, this subject position reflects not only “goodwill” meritocracy, but also individual meritocracy in an interesting way. These persons

voice their desire to be “recognized” for the work they do in the area of diversity. In this way, they center themselves and their efforts. They center their achievements, the fact that they have met the exacting standards of higher education, and finally they center their willingness to give back by working to undo the barriers that other individuals may be facing. Therefore this subject position reflects a strong individualistic edge that is achievement driven. This in itself is not problematic. What is problematic is that these individuals described the “work” they do in the area of diversity as a contribution that is worthy of praise. It also gives them the currency to be acknowledged in academe for being liberal and progressive.

The discourse of these individuals reflected a separation from diversity issues that enables them to pick and choose *if* and *when* to engage with the issues therein. This can be evidenced in the view of social change that these individuals shared. Specifically some interviewees suggested that if change (actions geared at leveling the playing field for example) doesn’t happen or it takes time, what should be noted is that people are “trying” and they “care.” Thus in this view, while diversity is important, it is still one of many issues. While all of the universities resources cannot be channeled in that direction, interviewees say that what is noteworthy however, are the efforts that individuals are making in the area. According to these subjects, this in itself is worthy of celebration and acknowledgement. Therefore in the context of this discourse, the ideologies of individual and “goodwill” meritocracy center a subject with social privileges who is “aware.” This subject is making efforts in the area of diversity “work,” and importantly, desires to be recognized for those efforts. Invariably, this subject position clashes strongly with the *diversity is embodied and has material consequences* subject position. Unlike the former subjects who view diversity work as socio-political currency, for the latter subjects, diversity represents a lived reality with grave material consequences.

The *diversity is embodied and has material consequences* subject position represents how diversity issues may become bound up in people’s lived experience. Interestingly, individuals

conceptualizing diversity in this way claimed African American, Asian, Black, Chicano/a, Latin and Mexican racial identities among others. They generally spoke of experiences where they have been marginalized in some way. This subject position discursively constructs diversity issues as tangible with significant social consequences. In their responses these subjects reflect the belief that once a university commits to operationalizing equity and inclusion through the mobilization of diversity discourse, they must mean what they say and act accordingly. According to these individuals, anything short of this is lip service, which may foster disengagement and the need to “play the game” to be successful. Finally this subject position agitates for the recognition of particular group issues of marginalized individuals; as a result, the lived experience of injustice and marginalization is primary.

Therefore unlike those who view diversity as a means to acquire socio-political currency, it is an inescapable social dynamic that lends to group identities and differing levels of agency for these individuals. In addition to understanding their marginalization, these voices critiqued the social order that positions them as other, while magnifying the privileges of others. Therefore, these individuals critiqued the status quo and assimilation. Many of these individuals spoke of having to “play the game” in order to be successful in U.S. higher education. These voices, speaking from a racially marginalized subject position suggest that this “game” is cultural and political because some have to adapt more than others. These interviewees voiced their frustration with a system where higher status people (White successful academics with a history of benefiting from socially constructed privileges) are creating rules that everybody has to follow. These individuals suggest that the “rules” are exclusionary and they were created by a few voices—so not everybody has input into how the “game” should be played. Despite the constructed nature of this game, there are real material consequences that reflect a larger social structure that enables and constrains different levels of privilege.

Others spoke of the consequences of not “playing the game” and the balancing act that may be necessary as a result (from code-switching to carefully critiquing colleagues of “goodwill”). Through their critiques these individuals called for an acknowledgement of personal experiences of oppression and the contextual constraints that affect the agency of members of historically underrepresented and marginalized groups in U.S. higher education. These voices even critiqued the call for “positive outcomes” in diversity efforts, while also asserting that diversity issues are complicated, resist easy answers, and must become an institutional imperative. Unlike other subject positions that emerged, these individuals called for more action. This subject position, both in its ideological leaning and view of diversity, competes with those subjects positions in which speakers just want to “add” variety and difference, think through practical and institutional constraints and even those who want to be praised for their efforts. Moving beyond meritocracy and retrenchment of the status quo for example, individuals who spoke about embodied diversity advocated for social action that recognizes histories of oppression, and contemporary contextual constraints that delimit the success of some communities.

Finally the *diversity requires collective advocacy for change* subject position suggests that institutions must actively work to solve issues of inequity. Generally these individuals self identified as members of historically marginalized groups including, the African American, Chicano/a, and Mexican communities among others. They suggested that limitations to the success of all persons in any institutional environment must be addressed to live out the mandates of a democratic society grounded in equality. Persons in this subject position advocate for change that is motivated by equity, inclusion and social justice. Therefore these individuals advocate for deep structural change if necessary. They expressed a willingness to ensure that all persons understand the reasons for this imperative even as they articulated a vision of justice and community. In fact these individuals offer critiques of ongoing inequities, a problematic status quo that privileges some

groups at the expense of others, and assimilation. In addition to the critiques, these individuals sought to complexify diversity issues by calling for a greater understanding of intersecting identities and intersecting oppressions. One of the key assumptions these interviewees reflected in their discourse is the idea that our collective future as a nation depends on collaboration and just action. This assumption clashes with the ideological idea that the oppressed should champion their own change as some in the *extreme pluralism* and *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* standpoints advocated. These individuals also contested the idea of “playing the game” in their advocacy for changing systems and creating institutional practices that are equitable for all persons. Finally interviewees in this subject position took an oppositional stance to individual meritocracy and “goodwill” meritocracy in their call for unified action for the social change of oppressive systems. In its avowal of collaborative action, the key assumptions of those in this subject position clash with the ideology that the marginalized should be the primary agents of oppressive systems.

In the advancement of ideologies related to meritocracy and the description of who is responsible for social change, the voices from the first three subject positions, evidencing levels of privilege, contribute to an institutional climate where the marginalized are expected to “play the game” to be successful. These higher status individuals either did not call attention to problematic structures, minimized the effects of said structures, minimized the possibilities for social action by listing complexity and institutional constraints or centered a discourse of “goodwill.”

Conversely the *diversity is embodied and has material consequences* and the *diversity requires collective advocacy for social change* subject positions offered up critiques centralizing the following key assumption: “goodwill” and “good intentions” are not enough. These individuals assert that ongoing inequities that reify a problematic status quo—wherein some groups must assimilate to be successful at the expense of their cultural positioning—are problematic. This overview of each view of diversity, and the ideologies and key assumptions engendered by each subject position reflect the

social influence of different diversity discourses. Finally this summary illuminates how these ideologies and assumptions complement and compete with each other to demonstrate the differences in the perspectives and the strategic action that may be necessary to move forward.

*Diversity and Institutional Change/Effectiveness*

Given these findings, this study points to the following promising practices and considerations for institutions.

1. Institutional change efforts must take into consideration multiple diversity subject positions in institutional change efforts. Therefore those initiating and implementing diversity programs and policies must address not only the differences in standpoints but also the range of conceptualizations and operationalizations of diversity. One of the major contributions that this study makes is advancing the notion that multiply occurring discourses of diversity reveal different subject positions and thus perspectives about change and institutional action. Some of the positions called for sweeping change as persons in the *diversity requires collective advocacy social change* dimension advocated, while others were leery of change as in the *thinking through practical and institutional constraints* dimension. All of these perspectives are likely to be represented in an institution and may even emerge simultaneously in one department or office creating opportunities for misunderstanding. As a result, it is crucial that these perspectives are given consideration in order to take a proactive approach to potential conflicts, retrenchment and wasted efforts. Different subject positions lead to different views of change and institutional effectiveness; these varied perspectives must be acknowledged to ensure engagement of groups in producing forward momentum.
2. There are many dimensions to diversity and to how it is defined by different subjects, yet race remains a foundational concept to discourses of diversity. Given this, diversity initiatives/efforts must strategically consider how race may be a factor. The interviewees in this study suggest that while diversity has become a complex phenomenon, race is still the entry point into conversations

about diversity for the majority of people. Even when individuals tried to minimize race by talking about other forms of difference, invariably they discursively constructed race as a launch pad for issues of diversity. This was evident in the study as subjects from different racial backgrounds pointed to race in different ways as a part of their understanding of diversity. For example some speakers, generally racial and ethnic minorities suggested that race is a form of difference that has grave consequences and must be recognized as a socially constructed and influential force in U.S. society. On the other hand, higher status speakers, generally White males, often said that race is a confusing, problematic, and “irrelevant” social construct that must be undone by ignoring it. These speakers assert that the problem with race is *seeing* it. Other speakers suggested that the problem with race is *not* seeing how it continues to shape social processes thereby maintaining a problematic racial hierarchy that impacts higher education and beyond. Therefore institutions must be cognizant of how race continues to intrude; the reality is that race still sets the tenor for conversations around diversity. As such, conversations about diversity are invariably raced, and in said conversations, change agents must be aware of how race may be affecting discourse, ideologies, and social action.

3. The dominant perspective on diversity in any institution will affect institutional culture, and institutional culture has implications for levels of agency and general organizational success.

Therefore institutions must take a pulse (through surveys, focus groups or any other method deemed appropriate) to understand the dominant view(s) of diversity manifesting in those spaces to ensure strategic action rather than reactionary efforts. Different conceptualizations of diversity encourage, reflect, and create different ideologies that set the boundaries for action in institutions. Moving forward, institutions that desire to be successful in the midst of the ongoing social, cultural and demographic changes in the U.S. must be aware of the dominant views of diversity in those spaces. This knowledge offers a useful lens for understanding institutional culture and practice, and for setting benchmarks for forward momentum and future success.

4. Because current views of diversity, the ideologies, and the institutional and social practices they reinforce, may reproduce the social order, current diversity initiatives need to be reexamined.

The following ideologies emerged in this study: (1) individual meritocracy; (2) “goodwill” meritocracy; (3) the idea that the marginalized should be their own change agents; and (4) a belief by marginalized members of racial groups that they have to “play the game” to be successful in higher education. These ideologies that are mobilized through dominant views of diversity in this study actually reify the status quo. Counter to the social justice efforts that words like diversity have encouraged historically, the majority of the diversity discourses that emerged in this study do not challenge the social order to foster greater levels of equity for the historically oppressed. Instead, the discourses reproduce the social order. In fact, prevalent discourses of diversity reproduce whiteness as the standard. For example, the ideology of “playing the game” does not undo problematic social structures; rather, the ideologies encouraged through dominant understandings of diversity reify whiteness and racial hierarchy, while enabling and constraining different levels of agency that serve to maintain the status quo. As long as diversity discourses stay at the level of reproducing the social order, the social justice ideas that historically marked the mobilization of words like diversity will go unrealized (Gutierrez, 1994), and institutions will not meet their goals of being just and equitable spaces for all persons (Fairclough 1995; 2003). To be successful, institutions may need to reexamine current diversity initiatives and programs to critique how said programs may be reproducing a problematic social order.

5. Training programs (including faculty development programs) should create space to address multiple views of diversity, and the issues therein. Dialogue rather than prescriptions about the differences in positionalities is crucial moving forward. Such open consideration is based on the contentious nature of diversity issues, and the multiple views that exist; dialogue may begin the process of building understanding among different standpoints. This is a crucial next step in

ensuring that words like diversity carry forward the aims of building a just and democratic society, otherwise misunderstanding, conflict, and wasted efforts will prevail.

### *National and Institutional Identities*

In addition to pointing to some noteworthy promising institutional considerations, this study also creates space for considering the reasons for the contentious nature of the word “diversity.” When I first began my research on diversity, I defined diversity categorically (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). While I knew that diversity is nuanced and complex, it took this dissertation process for me to conclude that diversity is more than numbers of people from different groups. This understanding crystallized as existing scholarship and my interviews with participants reflected how subjects are caught betwixt and between complex social processes shaped by historical interactions and social constructions. This in itself led me to the conclusion that diversity is not *only* about difference, it is in fact as Stephen Macedo suggests, at the heart of an intense “contest over what defines us as a nation” (as cited in Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005, p. 3).

The interviews from this study suggest that defining diversity is complicated because its very definition has grave implications for setting the boundaries of U.S. institutional identities and by default, national identity. Macedo’s (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005) assertion is reflected in Schuck’s (2001) notion that the definition of U.S. identity is contested on three temporal planes: *past*, *present* and *future*. All three perspectives are crucial to defining who U.S. Americans are and policing the actions of members of that community.

Schuck (2001) suggests that the past is the connection to those who have created what we know today as the United States of America. The past speaks of the founding of the nation, bloodlines, ancestry, history, and the construction of national culture. Schuck suggests that this past perspective is often articulated through stories which may or may not be real. What is real and what matters is that the stories articulate a sense of national identity. This past perspective then speaks to

the mythic imagined community of the nation. More than the other two perspectives, it answers the question of ‘who are we?’

The present perspective speaks of who should decide the shape of contemporary U.S. society, while the future perspective speaks of where the nation desires to be, and implicates policies and procedures that will move the nation in that direction. These three temporal perspectives are critical for this discussion because different views of diversity mobilize different perspectives of North America’s past, present and future. More importantly, multiply occurring discourses of diversity reflect the ongoing struggle to define America’s present and future by determining through said discourses: (1) the boundaries for inclusion; and (2) the limits of power afforded different subjects. In fact Calhoun suggests in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (1994) that “the politics of individual and collective identity were joined...[in American history] because the question was raised of what sort of individual identity qualified one to participate in the public discourses that shaped policy and influenced power” (p. 2). He further asserts that the joining of these politics can be attributed to the rise of democracy and the subsequent need to define the “will of the people” (p.2). Grounded in economic expansion and whiteness, the will of the people in the early U.S. context set a standard for citizenship that encouraged margins and centers, and in/out groups; in so doing the stage was set for fierce contestation as reflected in the multiply occurring discourses of diversity. In fact what multiply occurring discourses of diversity reflect is both the reinforcement and contestation of the monocultural ethnoracial Eurovision (MEE) that has been the mainstay of U.S. society (Goldberg, 1994). In this historical moment, while some groups are trying to maintain the power of this vision and the society it engenders through discursive formations, others are trying to undo it by creating new visions through their discourse. For example, the discourse of “goodwill” that emerged in this study ends up maintaining the influence of MEE through the advancement of superficial efforts that do not alter the status quo. Even the perspective of “playing the game”

reflects the hegemonic workings of MEE, as individuals and groups are compelled to reproduce the social order encouraged by this vision. While the purpose of “playing the game” is to gain the positional power that would enable one to change the rules of the “game,” the question remains of how subscribing to the rules of MEE can actually change the tenor and direction of said “game.”

This social influence that MEE had and has on U.S. society is reflected in the work of Marx (1998) who conducted a comparative study of nation building in the United States, South Africa and Brazil. Citing historical struggles and legal and social marginalization among others, Marx presents a divisive approach to nation-state building grounded in exclusionary tactics and the reinforcement of cleavages. He argues that in the U.S. and the South African context, “Institutionalizing common prejudice against blacks reinforced white nationalism” and particularly in the U.S. context, made the difference between a divided and a united union in the critical years of nation building in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by diminishing “intrawhite conflict” (p. 12-13). The power of this, Marx argues, is that in all three nations, “nationhood was institutionalized on the basis of race; [thus] the political production of race and the political production of nationhood were linked” (p. 25). This notion is critically powerful in understanding why the U.S. continues to struggle to move beyond the negative impact of race as a social construct. It also illuminates why discourses of diversity may be raced, and grounded in conversations about national identity.

Thus at the core of this conversation are questions about national identity, racial politics, citizenship and who should have those rights. In fact a quest to define the “prototypical” U.S. American identity historically and in contemporary times reflects the assertion made by Calhoun (1994) in the prologue. Without a doubt the politics of identity and the struggle embedded in forging national, institutional and individual identities cannot be erased from contemporary struggles to define diversity in U.S. institutions. It is the history of margins, centers, and contesting said social formations that complicate the notion of diversity as illustrated by those advocating for institutional

action and collaborative change. It is these dynamics that make talk of diversity and its attendant issues like affirmative action and general institutional change, convoluted and contentious.

In short, as diversity continues to emerge as a critical phenomenon and as it is wielded in institutional change efforts in arenas like U.S. higher education, efforts must be made to contextualize it in light of history, experiences, and subsequently subject positions inscribed with varying costs and benefits. To understand multiple meanings of diversity is to take a crucial step towards ensuring the equity and inclusion of all persons in the context of a diverse society. By exposing the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of discourses of diversity, one exposes the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the U.S. polity and contemporary understandings of American identity, and socio-cultural formations. It even exposes some of the effects of differential levels of privilege in this epoch.

#### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One key limitation in this study is the sample. Due to the emphasis on campus leaders (both faculty and students), and administrators, it left out a segment of the population that does not have positional power on campuses. Yet these individuals might have offered different perspectives of the institution by virtue of their position. Interviewing non-leaders could have generated more ideas on views and approaches to diversity.

Furthermore, I was only able to conduct interviews at two universities and in two different regions of the U.S. This limited scope of the study. This study can be extended in the future by adding more sites, and interviewing more deeply and widely in other institutions across the nation. This additional breadth will add tremendous richness to the findings and will go a long way towards offering greater insight into multiply occurring conceptualizations of diversity and the socio-cultural issues connected to those ideas. Recent ruptures in attempts to actualize perspectives on diversity in U.S. higher education institutions highlight the need for studying multiply occurring discourses of

diversity. What is needed in the future is a wider research pool to offer theoretical complexity and to lend to the creation of institutional change and effectiveness models, perhaps, that take into consideration the existence of multiply occurring conceptualizations of diversity. Finally, analyzing such discursive forms as modalities and lexical choices (Fairclough, 2003) would provide more details about how strongly speakers align with their claims and the nature of their characterizations of other groups and diversity practices.

### Conclusion

A conversation about discourses of diversity invariably finds its roots in discourses of national identity, power, and race, among others, in the context of the U.S. Over the last 120 years, scholars in the U.S. milieu have theorized these issues, spoken of their ramifications and attempted to understand how a historically raced society can move beyond race, and its attendant issues. Undoubtedly, it is the structurally raced nature of U.S. society that has made the idea and material consequences of this notion of race so embedded in contemporary discourses of diversity, and subsequently national identity politics. In fact some scholars have gone so far as to argue that this is *the American paradox*—America desires to move beyond the challenging structural effects of racial hierarchy, yet cannot do so because race is commingled in the nations history, laws, politics, structures and identity (Hudson, 2002; Marx, 1998).

Using standpoint theory and critical discourse analysis, this study takes a communicative approach to uncover how social practices, ideologies and issues of agency are implicated in the meaning-making projects that differently positioned subjects engage in through discursive practice. This study also adds to studies of power and whiteness in communication studies by demonstrating, through scholarship on diversity, another key way that racial hegemony is maintained through discourses of diversity. Finally, this study demonstrates that status hierarchies and levels of privilege are both reified as well as resisted by discourses from those differently positioned as administrators,

faculty and students. Studies of this nature will be crucial in the near future both in the U.S. and on the world's stage. As the U.S. continues to grapple with issues of national unity, equity and inclusion, and ensuring the full rights of citizenship for all persons in the midst of socio-cultural shifts augmented by demographic changes, an interrogation of multiple discourses in the area of diversity could shed light on the operation of difference in this new historical moment. On the world's stage, as geopolitics continue to reinscribe and challenge world formations, power and privilege, and the dialectical tensions between historical and contemporary forces, this study opens the door for interrogating many of these issues through the construct, diversity.

As a current social phenomenon inscribed with layers of meaning, the word diversity encourages controversy, opposition and fragmentation; all of which are evident in competing discourses about what diversity is and what it does. In this study I uncovered some of those multiply occurring definitions and their possible effects. Presently some institutions enter into conversations around diversity assuming that a unified definition of diversity is being invoked. Yet given the power of positionality in bracketing and policing ontological understandings (Hartsock, 1998), this study suggests that diversity is indeed defined through intersections of race, gender, culture, political and status positioning among others, and differs among individuals. Consequently change efforts to develop policy and to actualize the benefits of a diverse society must take into consideration these multiple meanings and their material consequences; without the added layer of context such studies engender, institutional definitions of diversity will collide with individual understandings creating dissension and limited progress in the current socio-cultural climate.

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## Appendix A

## Recruitment Letter

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Hannah Oliha. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque New Mexico. I am conducting a study on issues of difference in U.S. higher education. Particularly, the study hopes to understand the role that diversity issues play on university campuses. Through this study, the University of Minnesota and other campuses may discover more information on fostering the success of all university constituents and promoting healthy communities.

This is a multi-site study including your campus and the University of New Mexico. On each campus I will be interviewing faculty, administrators and students who are identified campus leaders. There will be 28-32 total participants and the anonymity of each participant will be maintained.

As a leader on your campus with a responsibility to guide and foster change efforts, I would greatly appreciate your input in this study. Your insights and the larger study will add to the ongoing conversation regarding diversity and multiculturalism in U.S. higher education. Specifically your input in this study could enhance the University of Minnesota's mandate to cultivate a more inclusive campus.

Your participation in the study will consist of a 30-45 minute conversation with me. I would be happy to meet at a time and location that you choose. In fact, if you are willing, I would enjoy the opportunity to treat you to coffee at your favorite coffee shop.

If you would like more information, I would love the opportunity to discuss with you further. My e-mail is [holiha@unm.edu](mailto:holiha@unm.edu). If you would prefer to chat with me on the phone about the goals and possible benefits of this study for your campus, please tell me your availability and I'd be happy to call you to share more information with you.

As I have mentioned, your input would be invaluable in this study, so I hope there will be an opportunity to continue the conversation!

All the best,  
Hannah

## Appendix B

## University of New Mexico Participant List

Table A1

Name	Race	Gender	Admin.	Faculty	Student
1. Interviewee	Native American	Female			X
2. Interviewee	White	Male			X
3. Interviewee	African American	Male			X
4. Interviewee	White	Male			X
5. Interviewee	African American	Female			X
6. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
7. Interviewee	White Jew	Male		X	
8. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
9. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
10. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
11. Interviewee	Armenian	Male		X	
12. Interviewee	Black, African American	Male		X	
13. Interviewee	Chicana	Female		X	
14. Interviewee	Hispanic	Male	X		
15. Interviewee	African American	Male	X		
16. Interviewee	Mexican American/Hispanic	Female	X		
17. Interviewee	White	Male	X		
18. Interviewee	Hispanic/Chicano/ Latino	Male	X		
19. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
20. Interviewee	Latin American	Male			X

These listed demographics represent interviewee identity claims.

## University of Minnesota Participant List

Table A2

Name	Race	Gender	Admin.	Faculty	Student
1. Interviewee	International (Pakistan)	Male			X
2. Interviewee	White	Female			X
3. Interviewee	White	Male			X
4. Interviewee	White	Female			X
5. Interviewee	White	Female			X
6. Interviewee	African American	Male		X	
7. Interviewee	White, Jewish	Female		X	
8. Interviewee	White	Male		X	
9. Interviewee	White	Female		X	
10. Interviewee	Chicano	Male	X	X	
11. Interviewee	White	Male	X		
12. Interviewee	Chicana	Female	X		
13. Interviewee	White	Male	X		
14. Interviewee	White	Female			X
15. Interviewee	Asian and White, mixed	Male			X

These listed demographics represent interviewee identity claims.

## Appendix C

### Discourses of Diversity Informed Consent Form

Dear Study Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research study by Hannah Oliha, from the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. Hannah Oliha is a Ph.D. student and she is conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Collier, a professor in the department. You have volunteered to participate of your own free will.

The purpose of the research is to capture various views about how diversity is conceptualized and harnessed on your campus. Your participation involves a 30-60 minute interview depending on your experience and the time it takes for you to relate that experience. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face, and will be scheduled at a time convenient to your schedule.

There are minimal risks to being involved in this study. If any discomfort arises during the interview, you may stop the interview without any penalty whatsoever or ask to skip that question. The benefits of the study are that your campus and others like yours will understand how the demographic changes in the U.S. are impacting institutional policies and procedures. This research could potentially provide data on how campuses can foster a dynamic university environment that will be beneficial to all.

Your participation will be kept confidential. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. These materials will only be used for accurate data documentation. The results of the research may be published, but your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. All identifying information will be deleted in the transcripts and in published materials.

Your responses in this study are completely voluntary; you can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still be in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Hannah Oliha via email at [holiha@unm.edu](mailto:holiha@unm.edu), or Dr. Mary Jane Collier at [mjc@unm.edu](mailto:mjc@unm.edu). If you have other concerns or complaints, contact the University of New Mexico Human Research Protections Office at (505) 272-1129.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
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I understand the procedures described above. I understand that my responses will be tape recorded. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR
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In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hannah Oliha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D

## Interview Questions

1. How does your campus define “diversity?”
2. How do you define “diversity?”
3. What is the general perception on campus regarding diversity issues?
  - a. What tensions, if any, do you perceive?
4. How have diversity issues personally impacted you?
5. When, if ever, have you felt understood by your colleagues regarding your views on diversity and multiculturalism issues?
  - a. When, if ever, have you felt misunderstood?
6. When, if ever, have you felt heard about your views on diversity?
  - a. When, if ever, have you felt silenced?
7. What groups speak the loudest about diversity issues on your campus?
8. What groups are silenced on diversity issues on your campus?
9. If you were to address a group of faculty members, what advice would you give them about being successful on your campus?
10. If you were to address a group of students, what advice would you give them about being successful on your campus?
11. If any changes need to be made in the area of diversity issues on your campus, what are those changes?
  - a. Who should lead the changes?
  - b. Who should be involved?
12. What is your cultural identity?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

